

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 1.

My name is Lincoln Naylor. I am a student in Ashland University's Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs, majoring in Political Economy and Business Administration. I am testifying in support of Ohio Senate Bill 1 and the importance of a core civics requirement at public universities.

A concerning survey recently conducted by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni reports that out of the more than 3,000 undergraduate students surveyed, 60% could not correctly identify the term lengths of members of the U.S House of Representatives and Senate; only 23% knew that the phrase, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people," came from the Gettysburg Address; only 28% of students knew that the 13th Amendment was the amendment that freed the slaves; fewer than one-third of students knew that the legislative branch has the power to declare war ("ACTA Releases Alarming New Survey Showing Dangerous Level of Civic Illiteracy Among College Students"). Another study, carried out by the Institute for Citizens and Scholars, shows that a lack of civics education has real-world negative effects. In their survey of more than 4000 college-age students, 40% were able to correctly answer only one of four civics questions, leading to 33% having no intention to participate civically in 2024, including voting, and 57% dissatisfied with American democracy ("National Survey Finds Warning Signs For American Democracy In Civic Outlook Of Young Adults").

These are concerning trends that need to be resolved. By mandating a basic civics education in college, I believe we can take the first steps toward a greater participation in the great American experiment of representative democracy. The American Bar Association, citing

reports on the issue, explains that “civic education, when done well, produces young people who are more likely to vote; work on community issues; become socially responsible; and feel confident speaking publicly and interacting with elected officials” (“Momentum Grows for Stronger Civic Education Across States”).

Although I do not attend a public university, I have experienced the benefits of a strong civics education through the Ashbrook program at Ashland University as well as throughout my grade school years as a homeschooler. I am politically involved, voting in federal, state, and local elections. I have developed a profound respect for the Founders and the government they created to protect our freedoms, as well as for our current government and its functions. I desire to see the Founders’ ideas continued in our government, not lost in ignorance. My civics education has also inspired me to participate in the government in the future, whether that be as an employee or an elected official. While not everyone receiving a civics education will desire to work in the government, I believe that in one way or another they will become a more informed and involved American citizen.

Your consideration of this matter is very much appreciated. Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions at this point.

Works Cited

- “ACTA Releases Alarming New Survey Showing Dangerous Level of Civic Illiteracy Among College Students.” *American Council of Trustees and Alumni*, 9 July 2024,
<https://www.goacta.org/2024/07/acta-releases-alarming-new-survey-showing-dangerous-level-of-civic-illiteracy-among-college-students/>.
- “Momentum Grows for Stronger Civic Education Across States.” *American Bar Association*, 4 Jan. 2022,
<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/resources/human-rights/archive/momentum-grows-stronger-civic-education-across-states/>.
- “National Survey Finds Warning Signs For American Democracy In Civic Outlook Of Young Adults.” *Institute for Citizens & Scholars*, 21 Sept. 2023,
<https://citizensandscholars.org/national-survey-finds-warning-signs-for-democracy/>.