

Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 88
Submitted by: Man Zhang

Testifying as Opponent

Chair Roegner, Vic-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear and members of the Senate General Government Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 88. My name is Man Zhang, and I have worked in higher education in Ohio for the past 20 years, a place I proudly call home. I am submitting this testimony in my personal capacity as a deeply concerned lawful permanent resident who strongly opposes SB 88 in its entirety.

I came to the United States in 2001 as an international student, inspired by the ideals of liberty and opportunity—the very promises that have long defined the American dream. When I arrived in this country, my husband was still in China. We stayed connected the old-fashioned way—through handwritten letters. It often took a full month for a letter to make its way across the ocean. In one of those letters, I included a little drawing for him: a small house with one garage door, a car in the driveway, a bench under a tree, a dog resting nearby, and a young boy playing in the yard. It was how I imagined our future—simple, modest, and full of hope. At the time, I thought it was just a dream, perhaps too much to wish for.

But that dream came true—and more. Today, we live in a home with two garage doors, two cars, two wonderful boys, and the sweetest dog. That simple drawing turned out to be an understatement of what this country has given us. My American dream not only came true—it exceeded my imagination.

Now, I find myself grappling with the idea that I could be compelled to give up my home—not because of any wrongdoing, but simply because of where I was born, depending on how this law is ultimately interpreted and implemented. I cannot begin to express how painful and unjust that feels.

As a college professor, I should be spending my summer teaching, mentoring students, and preparing for a study abroad program where I will lead a group of students—many of them my own son's age—on a journey to experience the world beyond our borders. I should be encouraging them to embrace global perspectives, to see how businesses operate in other cultures, and to return with a deeper appreciation for the freedom and opportunities they have here at home.

Instead, I must pause all of that to write this testimony—to speak up, because SB 88 compels me to do so. This bill is not just a legal measure; it's a message. And that message, whether intended or not, is one of exclusion.

SB 88 is deeply troubling. It contradicts the very values that brought me here—the belief in fairness, in equal treatment, and in the presumption of innocence. Rather than fostering unity, it risks division. Rather than promoting opportunity, it creates barriers.

Ohio's higher education institutions thrive through global partnerships—study abroad programs, joint research, faculty exchange—many of those institutions in countries now deemed “foreign adversaries.” SB 88 threatens to erode these relationships, weakening the cultural and academic exchange that is vital to preparing our students to lead in a globalized world.

Even though SB 88 specifically targets nationals from designated “foreign adversary” countries, its broader implications send a chilling message to the entire international community.

International students, regardless of their country of origin, pay close attention to the social and political climate of their host countries. If Ohio is perceived as unwelcoming or discriminatory toward certain groups of legal residents, it risks damaging its reputation as a destination for global education. According to a recent report from the American Immigration Council, 36,884 international students are currently enrolled in Ohio colleges and universities. These students contribute \$1.3 billion to Ohio's economy across the state. Moreover, international students drive innovation, enhance research output, and enrich the academic environment. If SB 88 passes, it could deter not only targeted individuals but also those from other nations who fear being next. The long-term result would be a decline in enrollment, lost economic contributions, and diminished global competitiveness for Ohio's higher education institutions.

This is not just about me. **It's about the future we are shaping for the next generation.**

I urge you to vote **NO** on SB 88—for the sake of fairness, for the sake of our students, and for the sake of the American dream that still lives in the hearts of so many.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this testimony are my own and do not reflect the official position of any institution with which I am affiliated.

Thank you for your time and your public service.

Sincerely,
Man Zhang