

Written Testimony of Riley Argonis, B.S.

For the Senate Higher Education Committee

Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee,

My name is Riley Argonis, and I graduated from the University of Cincinnati in the spring of 2023. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati and write to you as a private citizen. I will be providing my testimony in opposition to SB1 from the experiences I had at UC as a student and a post-grad. I was born and raised in Michigan and chanced upon UC at a college fair during my senior year in high school. I was greatly impressed by its breadth of study areas and ample opportunities for students and recent grads. They boasted strong enrollment numbers, a good graduation rate, and the opportunity for hands-on learning, which were coupled with unique degree offerings I could not find from Michigan's schools. These characteristics and proven outcomes led me to applying and attending this Ohio university as my first choice, out of state tuition being no deterrent to what I believed was the superior educational institution among the ones I had applied to.

As a result of attending an Ohio university, I fell in love with the state and decided to move here permanently to begin my adult life and my service to the city of Cincinnati and state of Ohio. In the past two years, I have begun to make plans to attend university in Ohio again to further my skills and better contribute to the state of Ohio **but will not do it should this bill pass**. SB1 severely limits the ability of our universities to remain the top-scoring, growth-driving institutions that they are. Colleges like OSU, Case Western, Miami University, and UC among others will **never** be spoken of in the same breath among any student, adult, or family looking to choose their college, not within or outside of Ohio, should SB1 pass. This will cause devastating ripple effects for our similarly high-praised institutions, like Cincinnati Children's Hospital and Cleveland Clinic, because of highly skilled students and professionals no longer viewing Ohio as a suitable place to settle or further their skills. We will undoubtedly see a massive brain drain that will hurt not only our state reputation but our economy irreparably.

There is no deep, sinister bias that festers within our state universities. Our outcomes and reputation among other prestigious universities and academic institutions across the country prove this as a fact. Students in Ohio colleges do not suffer from being taught

about a wide range of topics. They do not suffer from reaching their own conclusions about the topics they study. They certainly do not suffer at the hands of their professors and faculty, who are instrumental in solidifying our academic institutions as strong, reliable leaders in academic research across the country, and our graduates as capable, intelligent career candidates. To interrupt these processes and to muzzle professors who are proven and established experts in their fields can only result in financial and reputational ruin. There is no moral danger to students learning about something they may personally not believe in or have no established opinion on. The moral danger lies in falsely presenting two sides of certain topics as equal in measure for the sake of “intellectual diversity,” to prevent the teachings of important but tough topics in the name of “anti-DEI,” and to platform inflammatory or uneducated speakers at college campuses in the name of “fairness.” Our university students are not children to be coddled and shielded from reality, though SB1 treats them as such. They ought to be allowed to learn about every aspect of any topic they desire down to the last gory detail with the strongest scientific or historical accuracy our current knowledge allows, as **any** student has the right to. Our highly respected and accredited Ohio universities ought to be at liberty to facilitate that kind of devoted education with no fear, which SB1 does not allow by design.

I want so strongly to remain in the state and city that saw me become an adult. **I want to attend college in Ohio again and settle here permanently, but I will not and cannot do so should SB1 pass.**