

Testimony of Cynthia D. Porter, Ph.D.  
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee  
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair  
February 10, 2025

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

My name is Cynthia Porter, and I am a professor of German at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for 2.5 years. I do not represent Ohio State, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1. As an Ohio native, hailing from Lima and Columbus, OH, I am deeply disturbed by the amount of governmental overreach and micromanagement of higher education that is currently being considered acceptable and/or admissible as represented in S.B. 1. Coming from a background that is deeply invested in the overlapping power structures bridging the freedoms of speech, research (academic freedom), and assembly with a scope of international relations, this testimony serves to voice my pressing concern about the degree of damage S.B. 1 would cause for future generations of students and civilians, alike. Rather than trusting the expertise of a top research institution, bills like S.B. 1 fundamentally undermine the rigor and endeavors toward providing students with equitable, well-rounded experience and education during their time pursuing a degree in higher education. It also infringes on the rights of individual faculty and staff members.

Of course, the reach of this bill would extend beyond that of Ohio universities and colleges, further impacting the kind of future we are swiftly marching toward. We must ask what is driving such a restrictive bill, ultimately impacting the access to critical thinking skills and respectful management of diverse perspectives. Rather than focusing on the emotions of one demographic over the other, we need state legislature to focus on structural and logistical features of our state – supporting equitable access to opportunities and enhancement of our state's success. The prioritization of one group's emotional maturity tied to events of our past and present have no relevance on the required depth and breadth featured in the research and education conducted and provided in any given educational institution. Academic institutions are required to go through (re)accreditation, proving their continued rigor and quality of educational provision to the broader population. The concerns fueling efforts, like those represented in and by S.B. 1, to restrict individual perspectives, personal growth (via continued education and training), and truths undermine already established channels of content (curricular) consideration and contemplation.

Respectfully,

Cynthia D. Porter

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Porter', with a stylized flourish at the end.