

Testimony of Ruth Foote, Professor, Owens Community College
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 6, 2025

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

My name is Ruth Foote and I am a professor of photography at Owens Community College where I have taught for 20 of my 32 year teaching career. I do not represent Owens but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in **opposition to Senate Bill 1.**

I am an art educator, and a significant aspect of understanding art is understanding the social and political historical context as well as the aesthetic. Artists have been in the cutting edge of social and political conscience illuminating societal ills and raising awareness. Artists are usually the first to illustrate that “the emperor is naked” through their work.

Senate Bill 1 is an abomination. It is “naked.” It is a complete illusion, and anyone who thinks it has any merit is delusional. Artists are already creating commentary on how damaging this kind of legislation is.

Institutions of higher education have historically been places where ideas have freedom to be explored and challenged under the protection of tenure. Both good and bad ideas are protected. This is important because all ideas that are debated encourage creativity, reflection, and further exploration. This is vital to the betterment of humanity. The removal of tenure reduces education to propaganda dissemination of whoever is in power. Higher education will become the dumbing down of the population if faculty are stripped of their authority as experts in their discipline.

Faculty are the HEART of education, *not* administrators, board of directors or politicians. FACULTY provide mind expanding growth opportunities for learners, *not* the administrators or politicians. FACULTY should be making pedagogical decisions, not administrators or politicians.

STUDENTS attend an institution of higher ed for the education provided by FACULTY, *not* for administrators or politicians. *Conditions that are best for faculty are best for the students.*

Aren't students the purpose of institutions of learning?

One of the very things I value about teaching at a Community College is the diversity. I encounter students who are first generation college students. College was not an option for family members before them due to economic, racial, gender barriers. I hear first-hand the discrimination many of them still face in 2025. Racism, sexism, gender violence. I have participated in diversity inclusion education and workshops. The effort to be inclusive has had a POSITIVE impact on the educational environment. Much of diversity education has also been about correcting inaccurate propaganda, correcting lies passed off as history. Students deserve the truth, deserve access to diverse viewpoints, deserve acceptance instead of discrimination. This bill proposes to stop growth and progress.

Under the guise of “intellectual diversity” (using the language of progress to thwart it and do the opposite) Senate Bill 1 is actually providing means to STOP actual diversity, and institutionalize only one mode of regressive, discriminatory outdated thought.

I remember my own student experiences as a target of sexism. While in graduate school, I was a victim of sexual harassment, and my case was the first to test a new anti-harassment policy at my university. It was an awful experience that I transformed into a graduate thesis project. My exhibition made the local news, it touched many women who had been afraid to speak up. It encouraged them to speak up and help facilitate change. 30 years later, I can say I have witnessed great progress in this area. It infuriates me to think that bills like this one are set to erode the kind of progress I took great personal risk to fight for.

I don't want to go backwards. My students don't want to go backwards.

Your job as a politician is to increase the value of education, not destroy it by gutting its purpose; by destroying faculty ability to teach their discipline with integrity and truth. Your job is to protect faculty from being silenced, threatened, forced to teach lies that go against their discipline. Your job is to ensure that ALL have access to education both as students, faculty, staff, administration. Your job is to ensure the safety of ALL people on a campus of higher ed, not revert to a WASP centered, homophobic environment it took years of progress to escape.


Senate Bill 1 proposes the OPPOSITE of education.

Senate Bill 1 should never have been penned in the first place. It is clearly an effort to silence truth, prevent thought. It proposes forcing propaganda onto students, indoctrination into a regressive harmful mindset. **This Bill will create a dangerous environment in academia for all.**

It is your duty, your responsibility as a representative of higher ed to toss Senate Bill 1 into the garbage where it belongs.

SHAME on whoever wrote it. SHAME on you if you even consider it.

NO to Senate Bill 1.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruth Foote". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ruth Foote

Toledo, Ohio.