

Testimony of Tara Godwin, Ph.D. Student, The Ohio State University
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 Tara Godwin. I am a Ph.D. student in the History Department at The Ohio State University (OSU). I do not represent The Ohio State University and am submitting my testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I moved to Columbus, OH from Salt Lake City, UT solely to pursue my graduate education at The Ohio State University. I moved with my husband and we both love living in Ohio. We both live, work, vote, and pay taxes in Ohio and we plan to live in Ohio for the foreseeable future. When I am finished with my doctorate, we hope to buy a home and start a family right here in Columbus. I love studying at this university and all of the opportunities the university offers me to participate in important research that shapes current foreign relations between the United States and post-Soviet countries. The Ohio State offered me the opportunity to study and research the history of the Soviet Union with some of the world's most talented scholars, but it also introduced me to a new part of the country I never previously considered moving to.

I present this personal information to show that without The Ohio State University, my husband and I would not have come to Ohio. We are thoroughly integrated into our local community, and we love being Ohioans. Like me, many of the nearly 12,000 graduate students currently studying and working at the university come from across the globe to live in Ohio, where they will spend anywhere from two to ten years making Ohio their home.

Senate Bill 1 destroys the ability of not only The Ohio State University but any university in Ohio to successfully recruit graduate students and provide quality education to the hundreds of thousands of undergraduate students that study at Ohio universities. If Senate Bill 1 had passed before I decided to attend OSU, I would not have decided to move my family to Ohio. Senate Bill 1 destroys the ability of faculty to determine how to best teach the content of courses in which they are experts. This bill effectively eliminates all diversity, equity, and inclusion offices, scholarships, and training, which unravels decades of progress. This bill is a blatant attempt to demolish academic freedom. As a professional historian, I know that one of the first signs of a totalitarian society is to police education and remove educational control from the hands of educators. Removing the academic freedom of Ohio's universities is a dangerous, frightening step that does a disservice not only to the students learning in Ohio classrooms but the future of the state. The University is so much more than a place for students to receive an education—it is also a tool to introduce some of the best and brightest researchers to all that makes Ohio great.

Moreover, Mr. Cirino stated in his testimony that this bill is “about the core value that students come first”. I include my testimony to show, in unequivocal terms, that graduate and undergraduate students **do not want this bill**. Not one student testified in support of this bill—

passing this bill would demonstrate that the Ohio state legislature does not, in fact, care about putting students or their state first.

Sincerely,

Tara Godwin
Ph.D. Student, Department of History
The Ohio State University