

Testimony of Matthew Kraus, PhD
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 Matthew Kraus and I am proud to have been born and raised in Ohio. I am a professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Cincinnati, where I have taught for 21 years. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1. I am testifying against Ohio Senate Bill 1. Senate Bill 1 proposes amendments to the Ohio Higher Education Enhancement Act that undermine the mission of higher education. By eliminating tenure and the right to strike, this legislation disempowers faculty who are the ones most dedicated, committed, and experienced in performing higher education's mission of research and teaching. Having been a professor for almost 30 years, in the face of many internal and external challenges to universities, I have witnessed firsthand the wisdom and integrity of countless colleagues who have enabled institutions to remain true to their mission. Our prime directive is to generate new knowledge that improves our society and produce students who make well-informed and well-reasoned independent decisions about their own lives and the issues of the day. By attacking faculty rights, the Ohio State Legislature is committing educational wrongs. SB1 is actually laying siege to the value and values of higher education by disempowering its most ardent defenders.

A number of features of this proposed legislation do not make sense which undercut the validity of the bill as a whole.

- **The bill jeopardizes campus safety.** SB1 also includes provisions that threaten the physical safety of students. The syllabi of all courses must be easily available and searchable on the internet. These syllabi must include the "course instructor's contact information" and "course schedule" (classroom, meeting days and times, and names and contact information for the instructor) and be "accessible to the public without requiring user registration of any kind." This is an open invitation to antisemites, nazi sympathizers, and holocaust deniers to attack any student or faculty associated with a course on the Holocaust and antisemitism because the course is not conducted to their liking or because it is conducted at all. Who will offer and register for a course that puts a target on their backs?
- **Programs like Jewish Studies will be cancelled.** The provision "A state institution of higher education shall eliminate any undergraduate degree program it offers if the institution confers an average of fewer than five degrees in that program annually over any three-year period" will result in the elimination of programs like Jewish Studies at

the University of Cincinnati that are on the forefront of addressing antisemitism on campus. Such a provision privileges majors as a metric rather than the 100s of students at UC who take courses in Jewish Studies that disabuse them of any prejudices about Jews and Judaism.

- Falsely assuming that universities are indoctrinating students, the legislation requires that institutions “will educate students by means of free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry to seek the truth” and yet encourages avoiding issues such as “climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion” as potentially dangerous and controversial topics. Students may only seek the truth on a narrow set of subjects defined by the State. At the same time the bill requires a course in civic literacy with a micromanaged specified reading list that includes the Constitution, Federalist Papers, Letter from a Birmingham Jail, and Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. These are indeed important sources—that is why courses already include them. However, proscribing topics unliked by the legislature and requiring a course that instills their ideology fits the classic definition of indoctrination.

The governmental overreach of SB1 is outrageous. I vehemently oppose Senate Bill 1 lest our institutions of higher learning become the lowest abysses of uninformed propaganda.

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