



HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 2/10/25

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Organization Representing: self

Testifying on Bill Number: SB 1

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: none

Dear Chair Roegner and distinguished Senate Higher Education Committee members,
I hope you are each doing well. I appreciate your service to the great state of Ohio.

I'm writing with concern about Senate Bill 1. I read through the proposed bill with interest. My concerns stem from the government overreach required by the bill. If passed, this law would require significant government interference in the operation of state universities in Ohio. One example is the oddly specific course every institution would be required to provide, including a department Chair selecting the five essays from the Federalist papers that the class would read. I'm completely in support of students learning about civics and the specifics of our governing and economic systems work. However, this type of curriculum seems more appropriate at the high school level. It's not even clear where such a course would be housed and which Chair would make such selections.

The overreach required in the bill would create a lot of work not only for the universities but also for the Chancellor of higher education. The value of that extra work is unclear. It seems to just be counting things up for the sake of it to salve some fears that the writers of the bill seem to have about what is going on in state universities.

I know that fear is often irrational. Perhaps that is why the bill on the one hand builds in big government overreach and attempts to stifle academic freedom, but on the other hand, indicates that state universities should be more efficient. The provisions in this bill will make state universities less efficient, not more efficient.

Even though the main points of the bill seem to be to tamp down racial and gender equality, I am less worried about that. People who fight for social justice are doing that in every space that they are in. It's unfortunate that there aren't more people doing that work in the spaces that you are in because that could have such a tremendous and positive impact on our state -- particularly on the most vulnerable of populations. Instead, the point seems to be to target the most vulnerable people in our population. These choices have significant impact on the lives of everyday people. Imagine a world where instead you would be writing legislation to actually help everyday people. The diversity in our state and in our universities is what makes us stronger.

I don't see any positive impact from SB1. Instead, it erodes academic freedom, puts a damper on social justice, creates government overreach and the need for bigger government and interferes with employees' right to negotiate a fair work environment.

I believe strongly in the separation of church and state, but I do think wondering what Jesus would do is a helpful exercise. I feel certain Jesus would not be putting so much energy into anything like this bill.

Please do the right thing and do not vote this bill out of committee.

Best,

Theresa Walton-Fisette
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