

Testimony of Austin McCabe Juhnke, PhD  
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee  
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair

February 11, 2025

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

My name is Austin McCabe Juhnke and I am a professor of Musicology at Ohio State University, where I have taught for 6 years. I do not represent Ohio State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

S.B. 1 claims to serve the purpose of ensuring a “means of free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry to seek the truth” (578-80), but will in reality have the opposite effect. The bill specifically prevents educators from “indoctrinating” (675) students with regard to “any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion” (600-4). Yet the bill’s terms are so broad as to potentially prohibit any form of meaningful discourse in the classroom. In some spaces, for example, the idea that the earth is spherical in shape is a matter of political controversy, even though it is a mere physical fact of our planetary existence. Would an educator be held accountable for teaching “indoctrinating” students on this point?

The point of the bill, of course, is not to let students come to their own conclusions about controversial topics, but rather to provoke confusion and fear in the classroom, and thus stifle free and open discourse and keep educators watching their backs.

This is a bad bill for freedom of thought in Ohio, and must be rejected by anyone who truly cares about open discourse at our universities.