

## Opponent testimony for SB1

### Senate Higher Education Committee

February 11 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide written testimony in regard to Senate Bill 1. My name is Katlyn Barcroft. I am a lifelong resident of Ohio, a registered voter, a mother of 2 brilliant daughters, a supporter of public education, and I strongly oppose SB 1 and its companion bill, HB 6.

As stated above, I am a mother of 2. Our oldest child is a first-year student at Miami University this year, where she is studying Political Science and she serves as Miami's chapter President of the Ohio Student Association. After completing her undergraduate degree, she plans to continue her education in law school in preparation for her lifelong career goal of practicing civil rights law. A career in civil rights law requires great respect for and working knowledge of topics such as employment discrimination, ethics, social issues, and legal theory, disability rights, and the rights of the LGBTQ+ community.

Senate Bill 1 would make it impossible for my daughter to receive the education necessary for her intended career ambitions from any public college or university within the state of Ohio! My daughter loves learning, and she loves the law; she has from a very early age! She chose to attend Miami University for its abundant offerings of diverse curriculum, student organizations focused around her chosen area of study, and for the opportunity to grow as a person under the brilliant guidance and instruction of Miami University's well-respected professors and esteemed faculty. SB 1 would eliminate everything she needs and wants in her undergraduate studies, not only in Miami University, but within all of Ohio's public colleges and universities!

Colleges and universities are entrusted with the immensely crucial responsibility of equipping young adults with the essential skills and knowledge necessary to become responsible citizens who make positive contributions to their communities and society as a whole. To achieve this, these institutions of higher learning must have the freedom to venture into all facets of the human experience, even if it means confronting topics that may make some individuals feel uneasy. If students enter college and are not presented with these ideas and given the space to engage freely on these topics, what will happen when these students move on to the real world?

The educational gag order that Senate Bill 1 would place on Ohio's public colleges and universities would not only limit the extent to which these institutions are able to provide students with an appropriate and effective education but would greatly disable these academic

institutions from preparing students for any sort of a future beyond their academic pursuits that could be considered responsible or positively contributing.

Academic freedom on a collegiate level is absolutely essential as it allows our students to learn and our teachers to teach without fear of need for a filter. Additionally, decisions regarding curriculum must be based on a legitimate academic foundation, not popularity, politics, or personal preferences. Academic freedom at its core is far more important than any individual topic discussed in the classroom, required reading assigned by a professor, or stance voiced by a member of an institution's faculty.

When state lawmakers involve their own interests in what should be reserved for purely academic affairs, they not only undermine the quality of education but also potentially risk violating First Amendment rights of both faculty and students. The integrity of our education system depends on respect for First Amendment rights and academic freedom, and legislators who truly care about education and its impact on our future understand that.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this terribly disabling bill.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide my written testimony!

Sincerely,

Katlyn Barcroft