

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee. My name is Michael Fisch, an associate professor at Kent State University. This written testimony is in opposition to SB1.

The scope of this bill is too broad. It includes DEI, faculty rights, a required new course, and significant new reporting requirements. There are certainly many positive aspects to this bill. However, at the same time it discourages the very diversity it wants to promote by assuming that by eliminating offices, programs, and scholarships that target specific groups, for example women in engineering this such diversity will happen naturally, or the support will automatically go to a “better” qualified individual. This severely limits the commitment all our institutions should have to ensure all Ohioans have access to our colleges and universities. Education is an essential tool for economic growth and support for students in need is critical.

The bill has a MAGA overtone. It is not obvious that a different form of indoctrination will in time be more welcome or lead to better citizens than the present situation. Presently I don't hear many complaints about faculty trying to indoctrinate their personal views on students. As a faculty member I have many more important uses of my time than arguing over in most cases opinions. All citizens want the country to grow and improve. Just as in exams and homework looking at what you did incorrectly, or non-optimally can help prevent the same error in the future.

I am also concerned about the micromanagement aspects of the bill. Besides the course (that seems like, what in large part was in, my 10th grade government/civics class) there is a post tenure review that is ill defined, and it appears many required reports from faculty members and both the universities and state offices.

The requirement for three-year degrees and the current economic climate make offering summer courses difficult, and sections of a course for a small number of students cost prohibitive. Some programs (for example, nursing, engineering, physical and biological sciences) have courses that build on previous courses, so that the order they are taken in matters and is critical. It is not at all obvious how to get four years of courses into three years when they need to be sequenced.

Lastly, S B 1 would radically undermine the collective bargaining rights of faculty unions by restoring the faculty strike ban for full-time faculty members and prohibiting bargaining regarding faculty evaluations, tenure, and retrenchment (the process for reduction of force). This ban will leave faculty without job security and would leave academic freedom unprotected.

Sincerely

Michael R. Fisch