

Testimony of Sarah Hennessey in Opposition of SB1
Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair
10 Feb 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Sarah Hennessey (she/her). I am a geologist in Ohio working in an educational setting and I completed a Master's degree in geological sciences at Ohio University. This testimony represents my own personal opinions as a private citizen and not those of my employer. I am writing in opposition of this bill because I am deeply concerned about the negative impact it will have on students, faculty, and education in Ohio. My specific concerns regard the limitations that this bill will place on faculty rights, DEI programs, and classroom discussions.

As someone who was raised in a rural community with limited diversity, DEI programs were essential to expanding my understanding of the world and the variety of people that live in it. These programs allowed me to better empathize with the community around me and expand my previously limited viewpoints. This growth has led me to become a better communicator and decision maker, and helped me to become more connected to my broader community. I have also found that the freedom of speech in classrooms allowed for rich discussions that helped expand my critical thinking skills. Regardless of your personal beliefs, these discussions are essential to developing critical thinking and communication skills. Without the freedom to engage in these discussions, education in Ohio will suffer. Furthermore, this decrease in quality of education in Ohio will deter students from attending educational programs in Ohio, and discourage educational staff from working in Ohio.

If passed, SB1 will stifle educational opportunities in Ohio. As someone who had an extremely positive educational experience in Ohio, I am deeply saddened by the loss of quality education that SB1 promotes. Had SB1 been passed prior to my moving to Ohio to attend graduate school, I likely would not have considered attending university in Ohio.

I am testifying because I care deeply about education in Ohio, and I am saddened and alarmed by the policies proposed by SB1. This bill is opposed by the majority of those impacted. Listen to these voices, and do not pass SB1.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
Sarah Hennessey
(She/her)