

Dear Senator Cirino and all members of the Ohio State Senate,

I write to express my vehement opposition to Senate Bill 1. The views expressed below are my personal views and do not represent those of my employer.

I was born in Willoughby, Ohio, where I attended Immaculate Conception School alongside many of Senator Cirino's children, nieces, and nephews. I received my Bachelor's degree in Biology from Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH. I am now an Assistant Professor of Entomology at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, so as you can see, I am an Ohio native, through and through. I call this state home and have always been proud of the quality and breadth of post-secondary education options in Ohio. I am disappointed to see that the Senate would consider a bill that would threaten the high caliber and international draw of many of our institutions of higher education.

While I object to many of the aspects of SB1, I consider the elimination of DEI, threatening academic freedom around "controversial belief or policy," establishment of post-tenure review, and preventing faculty from striking as being the most worrisome.

DEI, at its core, is about EQUALITY. It is working to ensure that all people are treated equally and have equal opportunities to learn and receive a college degree. It is not, contrary to the beliefs of many in this governing body, discriminatory against any particular group of individuals. For example, I, a white woman, received a Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowship that supported me throughout graduate school. I was awarded such a fellowship because I had shown evidence of supporting equality and providing opportunity to others regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, not because I personally was "diverse." DEI is not a quota system, nor does it mean that individuals are handed things they do not deserve simply because they allow administrators to check a proverbial box on a spreadsheet. Moreover, DEI does not stifle discussion or force those with "conservative" beliefs into silence. Rather, it increases the points of view and brings diversity into conversation. This may result in students who previously have not been exposed to a variety of opinions feeling hesitant to speak up, because their opinion may be challenged by other students for the first time in their lives. But putting these students into a "safe space" where they will never have to defend or explain their difference of opinion will be doing these students a great disservice. All students must be challenged to think outside their comfort zone and consider the opinions of others. I know this is what the Senate Committee thinks they are ensuring with SB1, but in reality, SB1 will lead to siloing and the creation of echo chambers because faculty will no longer feel comfortable facilitating rigorous debate for fear of being accused of indoctrination.

Considering establishment of post-tenure review, I personally feel it is reasonable to re-evaluate faculty performance post-tenure. However, this is already happening at Ohio State, and leadership has multiple options for motivating faculty who are not meeting requirements. Effectively eliminating tenure is NOT the appropriate approach to this issue. Firstly, the protections of academic freedom afforded by the current tenure system would be threatened by the proposed process. For the same reason, elimination of tenure would be a major blow to the ability of Ohio schools to compete for high quality faculty candidates. A candidate whose teaching necessarily involves "controversial" subjects (e.g. a professor of obstetrics or natural resources) will be much less likely to accept a position at an Ohio school if they feel their career will be at risk for simply doing their job. The Senate may dismiss this concern, insisting there are protections in place against spurious complaints. However, there is a high perceived risk of persecution and potential legal battles, coupled with the overall concern that the state does not value the expertise and judgement of the faculty they are hiring. All of these concerns are made even more likely with the proposed reliance on student evaluations in faculty review, as they have repeatedly been shown to be

biased against women and faculty of color (see references below). I want to reiterate that I do NOT believe faculty should be without oversight. I simply think it should not come in the form of removing one of the most historically important protections for university professors' academic freedom.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my opinion.

Warm regards,

Sarah M. Short

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