

Members of the committee, my name is Casey Semple, and while I am writing on my own behalf, I am currently a student at the University of Cincinnati College of Law and am an alum of the Ohio State University.

In addition to being deeply concerned about SB1 and its impact on my education and future career as an attorney, I would also first highlight that SB1 is simply recycling the failed policies of SB83. Ohioans already opposed the SB83 attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that help students succeed and fought to keep Ohio's universities competitive and open to all perspectives, not just the ones politicians approve of. Bringing back failed legislation ignores the will of Ohioans that widely spoke out against it the first time.

Similar to its predecessor SB83, SB1 includes widely overreaching policies that threaten our public institutions' ability to compete nationally and the academic freedom that is given elevated protection under our current understanding of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article 1 of the Ohio Constitution. Limiting the ability of faculty to foster open discussions in the classroom by imposing vague restrictions on teaching controversial topics will chill speech and discussion meant to be explored in classrooms. I have multiple professors that have come from out of state and am concerned that restricting their ability to teach freely would discourage faculty from seeking employment in our state leading to a less talented group of teachers and less competitive education on the national stage.

Beyond restricting their ability to freely teach, the full-time faculty strike ban is extremely concerning. Limiting these teachers' ability to organize and collectively bargain is an affront to workers everywhere and should be treated as such.

As a student, I want to be challenged, to engage with difficult subjects, and to hear diverse perspectives. Science thrives on rigorous debate, evidence-based conclusions, and the free exchange of ideas, meaning discussions of "controversial" topics, like climate change, public policy, and economics are of utmost importance. Similarly, the humanities rely on discussions on civil rights and global affairs, and these topics should not be treated as political landmines. If Ohio wants to produce informed citizens who can participate effectively in democracy, we must protect the academic freedom to discuss essential subjects, not restrict them.

This bill also removes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives that support students from different backgrounds and ensures equal opportunity to succeed. Without these programs, Ohio risks alienating students from underrepresented communities, discouraging them from attending our state's institutions. I fear that this bill will diminish the value of my Ohio degrees, by making Ohio universities less competitive nationally.

Ohio's number one export is young people, and this bill will encourage the number to increase while discouraging out-of-state young people from coming to the state, spending their money, working our jobs. There are a plethora of other issues that could be more thoroughly addressed why this bill should be killed, but for now, I urge you to reject this bill and prioritize policies that enhance—not restrict—our education.