

Chairman and members of the Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Garret Travers, I'm a third-year student studying political science, journalism, and German at Ohio State University. I'm an Ohio native, I grew up in the Cleveland area, and have been living in Columbus since 2022. I competed on Ohio State's Mock Trial team, I am an author for The Lantern, Ohio State's student newspaper, and the music director for Buck That! A capella, a competitive vocal group on campus.

Now, for some of you, you might have come across my name during your work in the Senate. In 2021, in the 134th General Assembly, you all adopted a resolution in my name, celebrating my accomplishments as the 2021 and 2022 high school speech and debate champion in Original Oratory. You recognized me as one of "tomorrow's leaders." You referenced me as an "intelligent and motivated individual." You called me one of Ohio's "finest citizens," and while I am incredibly humbled to have received this honor, I'm not here today to brag or bloat. I'm here today to be heard.

Because just a couple of years after you passed SR 157, a celebration of academic commitment, and a recognition of intelligent, bright, young Ohioans, you are attempting to pass SB 1, a bill that will not celebrate our students, but silence them. Our education system thrives off of a pursuit to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive for students, staff, and faculty members from a vast range of backgrounds. In the classroom, this allows us to look at difficult perspectives and histories under a magnified lens. But under SB 1, you want to ensure that in science classes we validate the perspectives of flat earthers and in history classes, you want us to find merit in individuals who deny the Holocaust. By doing so, you will devalue education in Ohio by promoting misinformation rather than truth.

And the truth is, the professors I have engaged with at Ohio State are here to teach; not to engage in unnecessary busy work to post their syllabus online or worry about the legitimacy of their tenure. And without the ability to strike, you will remove power from all staff, and create a hostile learning environment.

While I am proud to be Senate Resolution 157, I will not become complacent to SB 1. And neither should you. And if you really want to put students first, then listen.

Thank you.