

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

I am writing on behalf of myself as a private citizen to explain why Senate Bill 1 would be extremely detrimental to Ohio's higher education programs. I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, and when applying for colleges, I took into account how my voice would be heard at that given school. Knowing that I was going to school for a Zoology degree, I wanted to be sure that the courses I took would allow me to explore the issues that directly affect my field of study. When looking for colleges out of state, I would not have chosen The Ohio State University as my choice of higher education if Senate Bill 1 was in place. I graduated this past summer with a Bachelor of Science in Zoology, and I am now preparing my veterinary school applications. I am once again very interested in The Ohio State University to continue my schooling. But this time, if Senate Bill 1 is passed, I will not be tempted to stay in Ohio. Needless to say, I am extremely opposed to Senate Bill 1.

With Senate Bill 1, some of my favorite courses that taught me so much about my future career would be in direct fire. One course that I know would struggle to be the successful learning experience it is, is Conservation Biology. The whole premise of this class would be considered a "controversial topic" given the definition stated in the bill. Senate Bill 1 states one of its goals is to "encourage students to reach their own conclusions about all controversial beliefs or policies and shall not seek to indoctrinate any social, political, or religious point of view". I am of the belief that students should be encouraged to make their own decisions on how they interpret what professors teach us in class. But how are our professors to teach us about these topics without bringing in political, religious, or social points of view, when that is the essence of our society? This bill will cause our state's professors to fear discussions. College is the place where we should be discussing these controversial topics. However, we as college students, and people living in America, base all of our opinions on social, political, and religious points of view. Scaring professors to avoid discussing these "controversial beliefs or policies" in class will only make our society regress. Certain topics boil down to fact, and although it may be "controversial" to some and may bring into play politics, religion, and social views, these are the facts that students need to hear to then base their own opinions on what to do with that information.

Overall, I fear this bill coming to play in Ohio's higher education. I fear that it will deter students (such as myself) to come to Ohio to continue their education. I fear that it will teach students that topics that are "controversial" should not be discussed. I fear that professors will no longer teach their courses with the excitement and passion that caused me to be so engaged in them. I fear that the future of Ohio's institutions will crumble with these freedoms taken away. I ask you to please listen to what students want, which is a vote no for Senate Bill 1. We are the ones paying for our education, and we will not stay in Ohio if our education is not protected.