

Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, my name is Brynne Spaeth, and I am a college student here in Ohio. I am deeply concerned about Senate Bill 1 and its impact on the education of me and my peers across the state.

This bill limits the ability of faculty to foster open discussions in the classroom by imposing vague restrictions on teaching controversial topics. I have found that an integral part of being a college student has been coming face to face with and being forced to question what I thought I knew and growing as a student, a person, and a citizen because of that challenge. As a student, I want to engage with professors of various positions and backgrounds without them being afraid to teach topics that are “controversial”. This bill also removes DEI initiatives and training, which could affect everything from support groups for students with disabilities, to rape awareness and prevention trainings. Without these programs, Ohio risks alienating students and discouraging them from attending our state’s institutions. Additionally, removing the ability of professors to strike may discourage highly experienced and knowledgeable professors from teaching in our state. Professors being treated and paid well doesn’t just serve them. It gives them the resources and time to support us, their students, and help us succeed academically and into the workforce. I fear that this bill will diminish the academic and economic value of degrees from Ohio universities, making us less competitive nationally. I urge you to reject this bill and prioritize policies that enhance—not restrict—our education.

Thank you for considering my testimony.