

Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Meagan Fowler, professor and librarian at Cuyahoga Community College. I urge you to oppose Ohio SB1, the Advance Ohio Higher Education Act, as it threatens the autonomy and effectiveness of our higher education institutions. Ohio colleges and universities play a critical role in preparing students for the workforce and fostering independent thought, yet SB1 risks imposing undue administrative burdens and politicization. I believe in the conservative principle of limited government, and this bill contradicts that principle by over-regulating higher education. Furthermore, these restrictions will diminish Ohio's reputation as a leader in higher education, making our institutions less attractive to students who may instead choose to study in states that uphold academic excellence and independence. By restricting academic freedom, SB1 will stifle critical thinking—the very skill employers seek, and democracy requires—ultimately weakening Ohio's workforce and future leadership. Additionally, the best and brightest faculty members—those who drive innovation, research, and student success—will be deterred from coming to Ohio, reducing our ability to recruit and retain top talent. Instead of imposing unnecessary restrictions, we should focus on strengthening pathways from education to employment. I respectfully ask you to reconsider this legislation in favor of policies that preserve the independence and integrity of Ohio's higher education system.