

Testimony of Deborah Arquette
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 10, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Deborah Arquette, and I am a concerned citizen submitting testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1. My family has benefitted from Ohio's great universities, and we want to keep them as the strong institutions of higher learning that they are now. After 31 years of working in elementary and secondary education and the medical field, I recognize how important it is to maintain good communication between fields, allow open discussion and thought, and promote research and advancements to make the lives of Ohioans better.

I am writing to object to the radical SB1 that is currently being rammed through the Ohio Senate. This bill does nothing to improve the state of higher education in the great state of Ohio, but rather weakens our ability to educate the next generation of leaders, scholars, researchers, and professionals.

SB 1 stands in opposition to academic freedom AND teaching and supporting the growth of undergraduate and graduate students. If we want Ohio to continue to be a state that educates leaders of tomorrow, we must not place politically motivated restrictions on public higher education. Universities add significantly to the growth of Ohio and are a strong example of learning and achievement. Contrary to the discussions of those pushing this harmful bill, SB 1 RESTRICTS free speech and academic freedom. It minimizes critical thinking and will do nothing to enhance our future economy of thinkers and doers in Ohio. I urge Ohio legislatures to stand against this unpopular bill. Ohioans are not interested in this biased and politically motivated plan.

While not perfect, I support the following amendments that have been offered:

Revise language on "intellectual diversity" to clarify that faculty fully maintain academic freedom and are not forced to teach ideas about which there is no consensus within their academic discipline.

Modify the American civic literacy course section to allow instructors to have control of the curriculum, as is required for accreditation.

Delete the broad definition of "retrenchment," which as written would grant administrators unlimited authority to shut down academic programs and layoff faculty at whim.

To address concerns about unfunded mandates and administrative micro-managing, the proposed amendments would: Modify the faculty evaluation section to allow boards of trustees to maintain or modify current evaluation systems that are already in place.

Remove the section on degree program elimination, which contains arbitrary metrics, and replace it with a proposal to study the issue.

Eliminate language banning programs and services for underrepresented students.

Allow universities to post general syllabi online for public information instead of overly detailed syllabi.

To address concerns about workers' rights, the proposed amendments would: Eliminate language that prohibits faculty from negotiating over fundamental collective bargaining subjects and removes their right to strike over unfair treatment.

Remove the section on post-tenure review that allows for tenured faculty to be terminated at any time without due process.

Let us actually strengthen the great institutions of higher learning we have in the State of Ohio. Faculty are here to support learning and growth of the next generation of learners. Demonizing the work they do is not only unhelpful – it is harmful – and goes against the tenets of higher education in general.

I submit this testimony in opposition to this harmful bill. I urge moderate and thoughtful action to move Ohio forward – not backward.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Arquette
29015 Belmont Farm Road
Perrysburg, Oh 43551