

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

I write today to provide testimony in regards to SB 1. My name is Hayley Verdi. I am the Writing Center Coordinator and First-Year Writing Program Director at Ursuline College in Pepper Pike, Ohio. I am a lifelong Ohioan and have taken pride in our state's ability to attract talent through our outstanding institutions of higher education. I attended Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, for my MA and PhD. My husband graduated from The Ohio State University with his doctorate in pharmacy and now works at University Hospitals in Cleveland. We are proud to call Ohio home and hope to continue to raise our three children here as we see it as a state that offers incredible opportunities to its citizens. I am deeply alarmed by the way that SB 1 threatens these opportunities. SB 1 would drastically limit the independence and freedom of our institutions of higher education placing undue strain on their ability to continue to operate, innovate, and thrive. I am opposed in the strongest possible terms to SB 1.

I am most alarmed by the ways that SB 1 presents an intrusion of the state government into the daily functions of higher education institutions in Ohio. My own institution, Ursuline College, takes immense pride in our ability to offer students life-changing education opportunities with limited resources. In 2020 Ursuline was ranked number one in the nation for the upward mobility of our students. After completing a degree with us, our students successfully move into professional careers in which they make better wages and support both their families and local economies. The vast majority of our graduates stay in Ohio and contribute to making our state a better place to live. We do this with a small administrative staff, faculty who often teach more than their required teaching load each semester, and support staff who fill multiple roles on campus. The onerous proposed staffing and reporting requirements of SB 1 would distract our already overly burdened faculty and staff from our mission to serve students. Instead, entire positions would have to be devoted to churning out meaningless reports and documents in service to the state. This is the definition of government overreach.

I did not devote myself to over twelve years of higher education in order to gain a job doing what I love in service to my students only to be told that I need to set aside hours and hours of time each semester to report each and every speaker I bring in, reading I assign, and course activity I plan to the government. The demands placed on colleges by SB 1 do not encourage intellectual diversity nor do they respect academic freedom. This bill will not strengthen our higher education institutions. It will hamstring them.

As the Ohio Department of Higher Education's website states, "Ohio offers a tremendous "Diversity of Opportunity in Higher Education" – 36 public two- and four-year colleges and universities, 74 independent institutions, 49 technical centers, and dozens of additional training programs that offer real value – more postsecondary options than most other states. The economic prosperity of Ohio and its citizens is closely tied to higher education opportunity and attainment, and we are proud to offer students a variety of paths for achieving that success." SB 1 threatens to damage both institutions of higher education and the Ohio economy at large.

This bill will make our institutions of higher education less efficient, less vibrant, and less competitive.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this shocking expansion of government surveillance of our colleges and universities.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Hayley E. Verdi, MEd, PhD