

Statement to the Senate Higher Education Committee
Opponent Testimony
SB 1 – Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act

Maya Neidhart, Medical Student
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Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 1.

My name is Maya Neidhart. I am a first-year medical student at The Ohio State University College of Medicine, where I serve as the student president of our Medical Students for Choice chapter. I have lived in communities in rural Southeastern Ohio, Cleveland, and Columbus. I am writing to express my opposition to SB 1 in its entirety, and its companion bill HB 6. I am particularly concerned about the Controversial Beliefs or Policies clause, which outlines controversial topics as “any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion.”

The ability to have open, free dialogue about subjects related to healthcare provision, including abortion, is essential to ensure future physicians such as myself are able to have well-informed conversations with our patients about their healthcare. I want to remind the committee that Ohioans recently affirmed their overwhelming support for abortion care, when Issue 1, Right to Make Reproductive Decisions Including Abortion Initiative, passed in 2023. For this reason, it is a professional and moral imperative for faculty to train medical students to manage the reproductive healthcare of their patients, and inform them of all of their options, without judgement - we all want to feel supported, listened to, and have autonomy when we talk with our physicians. If faculty are not able to present factual information to students about providing reproductive healthcare, as this may be construed not “allow[ing] and encourag[ing] students to reach their own conclusions about all controversial beliefs,” this will be a great disservice to medical students, and more importantly, their future patients, as their physicians will not be able to have educated conversations about all aspects of their care.

I also want to state the importance of being able to have conversations about “controversial topics” with my instructors and other students while in college. During college, I was encouraged to develop my voice, while also learning the importance of evidence and data to inform my perspective. This bill dangerously insinuates that “controversial subjects” are not factual, but rather matters of opinion, such as the safety and necessity of abortion care; this fact is supported by physician professional organizations and accrediting bodies including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Medical Association, and the American Board of Medical Specialties. Students should be supported in developing their perspective, which necessitates giving them access to accepted facts about reproductive healthcare,

climate science, and the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in education. This bill would be a gross oversight of the government, by encouraging censorship and threatening free speech.

I ask you to consider this testimony and vote no on this harmful bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.