

Testimony Opposing SB 1
Senate Higher Education Committee
Feb 11, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sandra Fiehrer, I live in OH 26 and I'm a graduate of Columbus City Schools & The Ohio State University. I volunteer with the best and brightest students at OSU each year. Both of our children graduated from Ohio public schools and attended The Ohio State University, and I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6 because they aim to dismantle the excellent public education we enjoyed when Ohio was ranked highly and wasn't controlled by politicians trying to promote their agenda.

Ohio ranks 39th in higher education¹ and my alma mater ranks 41st in National Public Universities². When I chose higher education, I had the opportunity to attend a smaller, private, homogenous Ohio college or The Ohio State University. I chose OSU *because* it was diverse and inclusive and so was the curriculum. I had just graduated from a Columbus City School where mandatory desegregation busing had been implemented by US Federal Court decision. I lived this history, it shaped me as a person and I don't want to see Ohio go backwards on my tax dollars! Ohioans like me want our public universities to excel, we want the talent to come here and stay here. That benefits ALL of us! SB1 and HB 6 will NOT make our public higher education stronger. This is SB83 reconstituted and Ohioans told you NO last year.

Requiring instructors to post their syllabi and contact info on public websites will potentially lead to threats & harassment against educators from outside political groups. This bill has policies that could lead to department shut down because one student dropped a class, students could find themselves suddenly without classes they need to enter their field and colleges could terminate classes and programs without valid cause. Many educators would be left without job security and post-tenure review would essentially end meaningful tenure in Ohio. Ohio would lose top tier professors to states that offer tenure and this has happened already with a friend of mine who taught at The Ohio State University. She went to Yale. We need to attract more talent to Ohio not drive them out.³

As policy is written in this bill, allowing students to ignore expertise, facts and history on "controversial topics" is dangerous. Educators must teach facts, not your political agenda. SB1 and HB6 could lead to medical students endangering our lives because they lack the necessary skills to address outcomes for different patient communities. These bills seek to justify a climate where any answer is correct. SB1 & HB6 aim to

¹ <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/ohio>

² https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/oh?_sort=rank&_sortDirection=asc

³ <https://www.dispatch.com/story/opinion/editorials/2024/11/11/ohio-shrinking-population-solutions-needed/75839793007/>

create a policy where instructors cannot correct students who don't believe events like the Holocaust happened or students who state incorrect information on a project or test. This disastrous policy makes it nearly impossible to teach about historical events. While SB1 states: "faculty and staff will not attempt to indoctrinate any social, political, or religious view," it appears that's exactly what it does. It will lead to the death of expertise.

Section 22b is a whole lot of republican nonsense attempting to inject your "I don't see race" propaganda into our universities and colleges. Ohioans know better and are better than this. The policies in this section would impact the ability to teach accurate history by pretending systemic racism, inherited wealth, white privilege and other concepts didn't exist. How dare you! I lived it less than 40 years ago right here in Columbus. I enjoyed belonging to a sorority in college and joined organizations for women. These harmful policies in SB 1 are an attempt to erase spaces for student organizations that focus on advancing success for certain communities. Every student should be able to achieve success and find a place to connect and belong. This is not what SB1 & HB 6 do.

For all of these reasons, I strongly oppose SB1. It's a broad effort to destroy public higher education Ohio. I'm incensed you propose a bill with the potential to ban classes, curriculum, and/or reading materials that focus on understanding the history or cultural contributions of certain groups or communities. Higher education is not a place for indoctrination, yet this bill includes many policies that do just that. I grew up attending segregated schools here in Ohio. Desegregation busing and a diverse public university were experiences that prepared me for success in the world. YOU can't erase diversity by pretending it doesn't exist and telling educators they must do the same. You need to stop trying to dismantle public education in Ohio.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive, discriminatory extremist bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.