

Testimony of Tara D. Hudson
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
Submitted February 7, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee: My name is Tara Hudson, and I am an associate professor of Higher Education Administration at Kent State University, where I have taught for over seven years. I do not represent Kent State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

As someone who studies higher education, I can confidently state that SB 1 will critically damage public higher education in the state of Ohio, with disastrous consequences for the democracy, workforce, economy, and people of our state. The Bill explicitly censors the speech of Ohio's public institutions of higher education, compromising the quality of education our undergraduate and graduate students receive. Additionally, because faculty working conditions are student learning conditions, the Bill's limitations on the collective bargaining rights of faculty unions means that faculty will no longer be able to advocate for the resources they need to effectively teach and serve students' needs.

Further, aspects of SB 1 risk engaging in viewpoint discrimination by a government entity given that the provision prohibiting a college or university from taking a stance on any "controversial belief or policy" explicitly allows a college or university to "endorse the congress of the United States when it establishes a state of armed hostility against a foreign power," a topic that would almost certainly be controversial. As a result, a college or university's speech would be censored with respect to some controversial beliefs and policies, but not others, in violation of the First Amendment of our great nation's Constitution.

If your intent is to improve the quality of higher education for Ohio students, SB 1 is not the answer, as it will have the opposite effect, to the detriment of Ohio's economy and future. It will seriously harm the ability of Ohio's excellent public colleges and universities to continue to be national and international leaders because they will be unable to attract talented scholars to their faculties. As a further consequence, it will seriously harm economic and workforce development within the state, as graduates of Ohio's public colleges and universities will no longer be seen as competitive and desirable candidates once the quality of our faculty, and therefore of our public institutions, inevitably declines. The damage this bill will cause will reverberate far beyond our public higher education institutions, and the consequences will irreparably damage the great state of Ohio that I have been proud to call home for the last seven and a half years.

I respectfully submit this testimony as a private citizen,
Tara D. Hudson
Kent, Ohio