

Opponent Testimony for SB 1

Ohio Senate Committee on Higher Education

February 11 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Theresa Gromek and I'm here as a faculty member of an Ohio community college and as a parent of a potential college student within the state of Ohio. I am in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1.

In my role as a college faculty member, my highest priority is my students and their well-being in my classroom. I often see first generation students, those returning to college after some time away, and others who may not necessarily feel confident in their academic abilities. These are vulnerable populations, and I take great care to ensure that my classroom is a place where they will learn, grow, and develop a sense of connection to our place of higher learning. I often teach writing, and one of the most common attitudes in the first week of class is that student think that they don't know how to write for college. They've been told that they do it wrong or that they lack the skills to engage with complex ideas. My goal every semester is to change their minds and to show them that they are capable and that their academic goals are attainable. Their voices matter and writing will give them the power to be heard. I want to hear their voices and to know what they think.

The proposed legislation in Senate Bill 1 would silence so many of those voices, but not for the reasons you may think. So much of this bill focuses on creating systems for surveillance and regulations of what can be discussed in the classroom. My college's administration would need to expend resources like time and money to develop excessively robust oversight for faculty who are so far from indoctrinating students, as the bill assumes; instead, we are struggling constantly to reach students who want to improve their lives through greater education, but face competing responsibilities as they balance school, work, and life. We need support and tools for innovative teaching in an ever-changing educational landscape, not increased evaluations. We need development to connect critical thinkers in the classroom to professions and vocations that fulfill our students' inner passions, not instability of our institutions.

My daughter is in kindergarten right now, and I sincerely hope that by the time she reaches high school that the state of Ohio can demonstrate that we care about her whole development as a student and a citizen of this state. Senate Bill 1 creates more road blocks and barriers for those who are trying to send well-educated, critically thinking Ohioans out into the world when we should be focused on helping our state educate competitive, capable, and creative college graduates.

Thank you for considering my testimony today and I urge you to vote "no" on Senate Bill 1. I appreciate your time, and I am able to answer any questions you may have.