

Testimony of Brent Ford
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 6, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1 as a private citizen, on behalf of myself. As a principal engineer with 20 years of experience, I have seen firsthand how the ability to think critically, explore ideas freely, and innovate without ideological constraints is essential to progress. This bill threatens those very principles by imposing restrictive measures on Ohio's universities that undermine academic freedom, diminish intellectual diversity, and ultimately weaken the competitiveness of Ohio's workforce.

Engineering, like all disciplines, thrives on rigorous debate, open inquiry, and exposure to diverse perspectives. Our universities should be producing problem solvers, not individuals conditioned to follow prescribed narratives. If Ohio institutions are forced to conform to politically motivated oversight, we risk driving away top talent—both faculty and students—who will instead choose states that value independent thought. This will not only erode the reputation of Ohio's higher education system but also harm the industries that rely on a steady pipeline of skilled graduates.

Furthermore, as an engineer, I know that standards matter. The quality of our universities directly affects the quality of our future workforce. If Ohio adopts policies that prioritize political ideology over academic rigor, we will see declining institutional credibility, lower university rankings, and a reduced ability to attract research funding. The long-term consequences will be dire, not just for academia, but for Ohio's economy, technological advancement, and industrial innovation.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 1 and instead support policies that uphold the integrity of Ohio's universities, protect academic freedom, and ensure that our students graduate prepared to think independently and contribute meaningfully to society.

Sincerely,
Brent Ford