

Testimony of Angela J. Johnson, Ph.D.
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 10, 2025

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

I am Angela Beumer Johnson, a professor of English and Teacher Education at Wright State University, where I have taught for 24 years. I do not represent Wright State, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I am a teacher educator. Please know that I go out of my way to honor *all* my students' opinions and to keep my opinions out of the classroom. To say I am disappointed at the return of SB 83 under the new bills SB 1 and HB 6 is an understatement.

In a time of teacher shortages, legislation like this pushes some of the most talented students out of education. One of my former students, one whose student teaching mentor called one of the best future teachers he had met, opted not to teach due to the stifling of language of all opinions and of concern for her safety, in her case as a member of the LGBTQ community.

As a teacher of literature, the human experience is our subject matter. Simply reading about human beings who may be different from ourselves—for example, a character of another race, class, gender, or sexuality—does not, of course, make the reader become someone from those categories, any more than murder mystery fans become murderers by what they read. If that were the case, Christians—like me—would become adulterers and murderers simply by reading the Bible.

Our teachers are terrified of being fired for the slightest thing that may be deemed “diverse.” It’s ironic that the word “diverse” is *claimed* to be acceptable when applied to viewpoints, but then directly targets diversity as unacceptable.

Our rights as U.S. citizens continue to be chipped away. Professors in a democracy must have intellectual freedom to teach. Authoritarian regimes limit free speech—not democracies, let alone the greatest democracy in the world.

Please speak against the very vocal *few* who are attempting to limit what the *majority* view as common-sense rights—Constitutional rights.

It saddens me deeply that in a world that is truly full of harm—war, children shot and killed in schools, children who are abused or hungry, or whose parents are addicted—some choose to manufacture problems where none exist.

Please vote to protect our democracy and set to work on the problems that claim lives and harm Ohio's citizens.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angela Beumer Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Angela Beumer Johnson
3674 Wenwood Dr.
Hilliard, OH 43026
614-565-8553