

Opponent Testimony for SB1

“Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act”

Senate Higher Education Committee

February 9, 2025

Robert L. Peralta, Ph.D.

Professor

The University of Akron

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

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony today. My name is Dr. Robert L. Peralta.

I am a college professor at UA. I have been teaching at UA for over 20 years. I love my job, I love teaching students different perspectives and providing factual, scientifically sound material for students to grapple with. It is through the study and exposure to new ideas, data, and theoretical perspectives that intellectual and professional growth happens.

I am writing to oppose SB1. This bill, in its entirety, will diminish the quality of education students will receive in Ohio, it will discourage the best and brightest in academia from considering Ohio as a home to contribute to excellence in teaching, research, and service for our great state. The bill will make our students less competitive compared to students attending colleges and universities outside of Ohio who will receive a full, unencumbered, and rigorous education that will challenge students to think about business, ethics, health, criminal justice, and engineering creatively and with curiosity.

My teaching evaluations have always been above average. Students routinely comment that my classes encourage students to consider and understand a multitude of perspectives and approaches to the social problems facing us. Our students are hungry to learn and should be encouraged to expand their curiosity and be given the tools to engage life-long learning and exploration. Importantly, I believe our students can more than handle difficult topics. They want to learn about and discuss the challenging issues facing us today. Ohio students can only be competitive in the marketplace if they have had the opportunity to deal with “controversial topics” in the classroom before they get into the “boardroom,” as it were.

I want what is best for Ohio students and their families. The high cost of tuition being what it is, should open as many doors as possible for students so that they can be productive and engaged citizens of our great State. A full and robust education without politically motivated limits must be provided to our students so that they can enjoy the full benefits of a college degree. Doing otherwise shortchanges our students and thus Ohio families, institutions, and businesses.

As a college professor with over 20 years of teaching experience, I am deeply concerned about what higher education in Ohio will look like if this terrible bill is passed. From the substantive limits on what professors can teach and research, to the threat of multi-leveled surveillance systems and harsh oversight/micromanaging of what we do as professors, to the elimination of the ability to strike as a Unionized Campus will undermine any sense of security and scholarly creativity amongst our academic community. I also fear for our student’s pathways to success should the bill pass. Major aspects of the bill undermine what is best about a college education: freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and the freedom to access knowledge, facts, and all the wonders of science. For these grave reasons, I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote No.

Thank you. I’m happy to answer any questions

Robert L. Peralta

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