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TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1
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Many people have had that bad dream where you didn't go to class, then when you walk into the classroom suddenly it's time to take the final exam.

In the version of the dream I am having right now, people who didn't go to class suddenly want to *make* the final exam.

I teach American Political Thought at the University of Cincinnati. It is a class much like the American civics course this bill would require of every undergraduate student in Ohio.

In American Political Thought I use unit exams—in fact I gave one today—because it allows for students to respond in greater depth to the material at hand. Today, my students were writing about the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, the Constitution. These are important documents. Documents that deserve careful, considered, thoughtful attention. But under this bill these documents and others would all be crammed into a cumulative final exam – leaving students little time to say much of anything about the documents that made this a country.

My students were also discussing the Articles of Confederation on their exam today. You cannot understand the design of the Constitution, you cannot understand how the founding experience shapes our government to this day, without the Articles of Confederation. But in the list of required readings in this legislature-designed civics course, there is no mention of the Articles of Confederation.

And about that reading list. Under this bill, the civics course instructor would ask the department chair which five of the 85 Federalist Papers to assign.

In my case then, I would throw out 25 years of teaching The Federalist Papers and ask the department chair – a person for whom I have the utmost respect – which Federalist Papers are the good ones. And to answer, he would draw upon his considerable expertise in cyber-security and international relations and the zero times he has ever assigned The Federalist Papers.

Why would you possibly design a course without ever talking to the people who teach it, or the students who take it?

So come to class. This is an open invitation to this committee and your colleagues. Come to my class. See how this works. See what we do.

We read FDR making the case that government is freedom's greatest friend. And Ronald Reagan's 'Conscience of a Conservative' speech that government is freedom's foe. We read Andrew Carnegie making the case that we need the superrich – and Andrew Carnegie making the case that the superrich should give it all away in the end.

We discuss making America great again and we read Langston Hughes' *Let America Be America Again*.

Why do we do all that? Because we are in the business of introducing wide-ranging ideas, teaching critical thinking skills, and empowering our students to make sense of the world around them.

Spend five minutes on any public university campus in Ohio and the Fox News vision of a university education – dedicated primarily to studying which Kerosene is best for burning an American flag – comes apart immediately.

I believe there are things we all have in common here. We want Ohio to have an extraordinary higher education system, we want our students to get a tremendous education, we want our young people and our state to thrive.

Before you mandate this and ban that – come to class. Do your homework. And let's work together to strengthen Ohio and its great universities and colleges.