

Opponent Testimony for Ohio Senate Bill 1
Senate Higher Education Committee
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Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1. My name is Margaret Newell. I am a history professor at Ohio State University. I speak for myself and am not here as a representative of the University, but as a patriot who loves researching and teaching American history. I am submitting this testimony to express concern at the censorship this bill embodies.

SB 1 is not about Ohio. This bill is the product of outside political think tanks. Legislation with the same language has appeared in 17 other states. These bills identify faculty political beliefs as a problem that needs to be legislated against; yet when a similar bill, SB 83, was heard in the last General Assembly only one student testified in favor of these bills, while 1000s testified against. Many of the requirements of SB 1 are redundant and seem designed to intimidate faculty and expose them to doxing and harassment. Syllabi are already published in advance for student review, and we have established channels for student complaints. Students already evaluate teaching, including faculty openness to student ideas, and departments take these evaluations seriously. It's hard to see how conservatives will be attracted to the profession under the contingent and bureaucracy-laden working conditions created by the bill's provisions. In fact, the legislature has demanded that universities seek faculty who are conservative—hiring people based upon ideology rather than merit or quality of research—which is exactly what they criticize about DEI.

I'm grateful that the legislature thinks American history is important. I'm here at Ohio State because I fell in love with the American Revolution in a college classroom. We know more about the Revolution and many other aspects of American history than we did when I was a student because of all the research that faculty at places like Ohio State do, and we share that expertise with students. This bill is designed to make faculty passive participants rather than allowing us to share our expertise on the subject. Defining certain subjects as controversial, and banning discussion, is censorship. Telling instructors that they can't teach subjects related to policy is not only censorship but damaging to good public policy. Opinion is not fact; we need to be able to share evidence-based interpretations with our students.

Right now, Ohio State has reached its highest rank ever among public universities, and History is ranked in the top 30 programs in the entire nation, public or private. Our students in all majors—whether artists or neuroscientists—deserve the best and most accomplished faculty who are leading researchers in their fields, regardless of politics. If you break our great public university, you'll be breaking something precious and valuable to Ohioans, something that is hard to put back together.