

When I was a child, my father made sure I understood that the United States was the best country in the world. I don't know if I ever asked him why, but if I had, he would have said "freedom." While my father and I are on the opposite sides of the political spectrum, we both loved and cherished the freedoms this country provided us. But that seems to be changing—and scarily quickly. Freedom of speech is at the heart of American freedom, but we are seeing movements for censorship in Ohio and across the nation. I'm writing to ask you to oppose Ohio's Senate Bill 1 because of the politically motivated and ideological censorship it imposes on institutions of higher education.

Has there ever been a country that censored free speech that was right in doing so? Has there ever been a country that censored free speech that was on the right side of history? Think of the nations of the world without freedom of speech; do we want to join that group? And to implement such censorship in educational contexts? That is exactly the opposite of what the Bill authors say they want. As Pranav Jani recently wrote in his *Columbus Dispatch* op-ed:

*"The bill talks about "intellectual diversity" but then makes lists of "controversial concepts." It encourages freedom of thought but then legalizes mechanisms for surveillance to penalize and even fire educators if they go out of line. The Orwellian doublespeak in these claims should chill every Ohioan. Who gets to decide which concepts are "controversial" and which are not?"*

My two children received an excellent college education at Kent State University. They said that they never experienced indoctrination—that that idea is laughable. If this law was in place when they were deciding on their colleges, I would have urged them to go out of state—where the seriously concerning censorship and the silly political micromanagement would not negatively impact their education.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Tricia Niesz-Kutsch

Kent, Ohio