

Written Testimony of Marianne Martens, Ph.D.
For the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Chair Kristina Roegner
February 10, 2025

Chair Kristina Roegner, Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee
roegner@OhioSenate.gov

Dear Chair Roegner,

Re: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/download?key=24444>

Thank you for reading my written testimony. My name is Marianne Martens. I am a Professor of Library and Information Science at Kent State University's School of Information, where I have been working since 2012. I do not represent Kent State University, but rather, am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to portions of Senate Bill 1. In the paragraphs below, I will provide two examples that I consider objectionable.

1. I believe that the provision to: "Treat all faculty, staff, and students as individuals, hold all individuals to equal standards, and provide every individual with equality of opportunity with regard to those individuals' race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression;" is a noble goal, and is exactly what I strive for as a professor.

The bill, as written, infers that we currently have equality in our society, and that all individuals have equal opportunities. That should indeed be a goal for all Americans, and I wish it were true.

However, the reality is that there are people and institutions who prevent us from being truly equal. We all know people who believe that they are more entitled to opportunities than those different from them (in terms of "race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression").

Institutions in our society, such as housing, education, the criminal justice system, and our political system, among others, make it clear that we are not yet at a point where all Americans have equal opportunities to be successful.

As S.B.1. is written, if any administrator, teacher, or staff member is overtly racist or sexist toward an individual or group, there are no actions that we can take. S.B.1 prohibits training that could help educate people about the structures in our society that prevent true equality.

2. S.B. 1 requires “...commitment to free and open intellectual inquiry, independence of thought, tolerance of differing viewpoints, and equality of opportunity.”

This too, is a noble goal, and one with which I agree. One of the goals of attending a college or university should be to be exposed to a wide range of ideas that allow people to experience “intellectual inquiry, independence of thought, tolerance of differing viewpoints, and equality of opportunity” so that they can become informed and critical thinkers in their own lives.

In my classrooms, I embrace differing viewpoints, and respect students with perspectives different from my own. However, if someone’s viewpoints are hostile, discriminatory, or harmful to other students in class, then I believe it is the responsibility of the instructor (and if necessary, the institution) to address these concerns in a way that maintains a safe and respectful environment for all.

Please consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely yours,
Marianne Martens, Ph.D.