

Testimony of Jennifer A. King, PhD
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 10, 2025

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

Hello, my name is Jennifer A. King, and with this testimony I write in several capacities as: 1) a mother of two young, Black sons, 2) a first generation college graduate, and 3) only Black faculty member of my respective college. I am a professor of Public Health at Kent State University, where I am also a proud alum. I do not represent Kent State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1 (SB1).

In all aspects of society, including the language of Senate Bill 1, I should not be who and where I am today. While sponsors of SB1 claim it will encourage diversity, it would have the opposite effect. By restricting offices and scholarships that target particular groups, universities could no longer offer essential support to first generation college students, historically underrepresented minorities, nontraditional students, certain nationalities, people with disabilities, veterans, nor encourage women to thrive in STEM fields. Not only will this limit the commitment all our institutions should have to ensure all Ohioans have access to our colleges and universities, it has the potential to decrease retention, graduation, and overall student wellbeing.

In my role as an educator and mentor, I take pride in working at the institution that is shaping the next public health professionals. However, with the enactment of SB1, retention and recruitment of excellent faculty is threatened by eliminating meaningful tenure at Ohio's public institutions of higher education. This will result in faculty seeking positions with more job security and a tremendous loss of intellectual capital, which will weaken the state's academic and research capabilities. Additionally, SB1's ban on collective bargaining, combined with an overly broad definition of retrenchment, would leave faculty without job security, and would leave academic freedom unprotected. Collectively, this will make it challenging to attract future talent in faculty and staff, but students as well.

SB 1 is a state-imposed censorship of what occurs in the university classroom and will have a chilling effect on academic freedom and freedom of expression. While it claims to address the rampant "indoctrination" of students, to which there is no verifiable evidence, the censorship of truth in certain topics along with the specific requirements of what should be taught is itself the imposition of a single view or ideology – that is true indoctrination.

I ask you to consider my testimony and future college students' (my sons' futures), and vote NO on this truly damaging bill.

Sincerely,


Jennifer A. King, PhD