

**Opponent Testimony for SB1
"Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act"
Senate Higher Education Committee**

02/11/2025

**Meghan Thornton-
Lugo, PhD**

**University of
Akron**

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dr. Meghan Thornton-Lugo.

I am an Assistant Professor at the University of Akron, and I am here to oppose SB1, especially the provisions around controversial beliefs. As a researcher and instructor whose areas of interest include organizational justice and diversity, the language around the instruction of controversial beliefs and corresponding indoctrination is ill-defined and paradoxically discourages that which it intends to enhance. Though I have a PhD in psychology, I don't believe it is necessary to understand that controversy and indoctrination are in the eye of the beholder. While I find my lecture on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to be uncontroversial, to a neo-Nazi the mere acknowledgement of the Civil Rights movement may be profoundly offensive and an explanation of the laws within legislation an attempt to indoctrinate my students.

SB1 therefore will actually limit the extent to which I as an instructor can even present the intellectually diverse perspectives it mandates because I cannot predict which topics, principles, laws, or research will be seen as partisan. For instance, as a Christian I do not find the idea of all persons having dignity to be objectionable. But, a white nationalist in my classroom may find it distasteful, and even suggesting such a view point by talking about different people's experiences at work may reek to them of bias.

These ill-defined terms and the legislation they are couched in are therefore doing anything but promoting intellectual diversity as they only create fear of speaking on quite frankly anything.

As such, this legislation also threatens the education of other students actually seeking to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities for the workforce. As someone whose instruction directly prepares students with the skills to understand a wide variety of perspectives at work, this legislation would paradoxically diminish the ability of our Akron graduates to engage effectively in the workplace with intellectually diverse perspectives because this legislation forces us to be beholden to the capricious whims of an uneducated few.

I therefore implore you to reject this legislation in the actual interest of intellectual diversity and the development of our Ohio students.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any of your questions.