

Testimony of Matthew Wu, Ph.D.  
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:

My name is Matthew Wu, and I am an Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry at The Ohio State University. I do not represent The Ohio State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit. Due to recent socio-political events, the US is rapidly spinning further away from the underlying messages of this proverb. From a fiscal perspective, government infrastructure is currently being dismantled where movement toward for-profit privatization (akin to what happened with Homeland Security in 2001) are emerging. Our national enterprise of research and education, which was already falling behind that of other countries, is now doomed to stagnate or even regress given new restrictions on federal funding. Most alarmingly, SB 1 mocks and threatens the very civil liberties that led to the founding of this country. This is an investment for irreparable short- *and* long-term loss.

Furthermore, the notion that education in the natural sciences can be “value-free” continues to astound me. Objectivity is a strategic guise used to efface historical trends that science has been and will always be conducted by humans. Medical stereotyping, the fallacy that race is a biological (not social) construct, and the push to dismiss climate change or the benefits of vaccines have cost a significant amount of lives. Contextualized in SB 1’s effect on higher education, we must remember that our human decisions to *remove* topics is an admission that such topics are unimportant and irrelevant. For example, no legitimate scientist would consider praising eugenics because such a topic is unfounded and morally dangerous. And yet, here we are observing principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion under attack because of claims that **selectively ignoring** American history somehow represents “fairness and excellence.” The consequences of SB 1 will be deleterious to how future generations conceptualize world readiness, the role of science, and the ontology of a just society.

SB 1 will transform all Ohio institutions into sink holes where aspirations cannot be achieved. How will we attract students and instructors when we present education to be meaningful for some, but not for all? How can we recruit the brightest researchers if intellectual freedom and job security is no longer institutionally promised? Much like how learning occurs via conceptual change, we cannot advance as a society if we choose to dismiss past errors and failures. We must recognize these historical and ongoing fascist violations of civil liberties to warrant the present need for remediation and improvement. SB 1 cannot pass. Education and research become meaningless when they no longer serve *everyone* in their intellectual and moral growth. Planting trees is moot if a select few in the future can enjoy their shade. There may not even be trees worth planting once democracy is lost and the landscape of higher education is permanently destroyed.