

**Opponent Testimony for SB 1**  
**Senate Higher Education Committee**

February 10, 2025

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

My name is Dr. Anne Whitesell. I am an assistant professor of political science at Miami University, but my views do not represent those of my employer. I worked at Miami since 2020. I write to oppose this legislation.

I teach a policy evaluation course at Miami. In that course, students identify a problem, formulate policy alternatives to the problem, and assess those alternatives. Students spend a significant amount of time researching how problems ranging from the opioid epidemic to rising housing costs to school shootings impact communities. They must make a case as to why this is a problem the government should address before moving on to policy solutions.

SB 1 is a policy in search of a problem.

This bill contains confusing language about ensuring “intellectual diversity” on college campuses. I encourage the members of the committee and the sponsors of this bill to actually visit a college campus. You will find that students from all walks of life share their opinions, both inside and outside the classroom. When students feel supported by their faculty members, they will talk about almost anything.

Speakers visit campus representing a range of viewpoints without incident. At Miami, for example, our students host a debate on what SB 1 would consider a “controversial” topic every semester. We have had debates on campaign finance, marijuana legalization, abortion, and even the future of higher education in the past few years. Students, faculty, and the community come together to hear different viewpoints and ask thoughtful questions.

At the same time that the bill wants to bring intellectual diversity to campuses, it seeks to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion. When I think about diversity among my students, I think about those who come from rural areas in Ohio and share their experience with their classmates who have only known suburban life. When I think about equity, I think about making sure that first-generation college students understand the hidden norms of higher education. When I think about inclusion, I think about the veterans who have served our country and are going back to school. The insights of all these students create an environment of intellectual diversity. Why would we ban the programs that provide them with the support they need to succeed?

As a faculty member, it is not only my academic freedom on the line with SB1. The potential chilling effects from policing controversial topics and banning DEI also compromise the relationships I have with my students. I ask that you consider whether this bill would create more problems than it would solve.

Thank you for your time.  
Anne Whitesell, PhD