

Ohio Senate Bill (S.B.) 1: Higher Education Enhancement Act

Testimony of Jon Fritz, M.S., Self

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

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony. My name is Jon Fritz, and I am representing myself. I am a fourth-year biophysics Ph.D. candidate at Ohio State University (OSU) here in Columbus, OH. I am researching therapeutic targets and diagnostic devices to reduce lung injury to patients who need a ventilator while sick. However, today I am writing this to strongly oppose S.B.1.

Though I've been living in Columbus, OH since fall 2021, I am originally from and grew up in Fredericksburg, VA. In my senior year of high school, I was accepted to two universities: Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA for engineering and Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh, PA for physics. The two schools couldn't be more different: one was a big, in-state, public school in Appalachia and the other was a medium-small, out-of-state private school in Western Pennsylvania. Eventually I decided to attend Carnegie Mellon, mostly because I knew I wanted to study more basic science and math. Furthermore, given Carnegie Mellon's history as a technical school and that I knew I wanted to study science, my bachelor's in physics had fewer liberal arts-style course requirements.

Thus, I am strongly opposed to the requirement that undergraduate students enroll in American civic literacy. Unlike diplomas in high school which are for general education requirements, a degree from a higher education institution demonstrates expertise in a specific field. Requiring students to enroll in and complete a course such as that listed in Sec. 3345.382, division B will either extend the time to graduation or replace a course better suited to their degree specialization. Furthermore, it's unclear from the present text what it means to 'complete' this course and to whom this course applies. Are students graded on a traditional grading scale (i.e. A-F), on a pass/fail basis, or on some other metric for course completion?

Additionally, it's unclear to which population of students Sec. 3345.382 applies. Sec. 3345.382, division C states that '...no state institution of higher education shall grant a bachelor's degree to any student...', a statement implicitly referring to undergraduate students. However, Sec. 3345.382 in division goes on to state that 'This section does not apply to associate's degree programs.' Why are associate degree programs explicitly excluded from Sec. 3345.382, yet graduate and professional degree programs are not explicitly mentioned anywhere in Sec. 3345.382? If graduate and professional degrees are not excluded, it's unclear to me why graduate and professional students should be expected to enroll in a course on American civics literacy particularly when they may be doing further specialization in a distinctly different discipline.

I spent several months determining the programs and institutions that would allow me to study science at the undergraduate & graduate levels. Eventually, I determined that Carnegie Mellon and OSU both had courses of study that allowed me to specialize more in what I wanted than at other institutions. **If a similar bill to S.B.1 had passed in Pennsylvania in spring 2016 or in Ohio in spring 2021, I would not have attended Carnegie Mellon or OSU because I would be required to enroll in a course inconsequential to a specialized career in biomedical research.**

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this vague bill. Thank you for your time.