

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1
Senate Higher Education Committee

February 7, 2025

To Chair Cirino, Senators Brenner, Chavez, Cutrona, Johnson, Koehler, Lang, Manchester, O'Brien, Reineke, Roegner, Romanchuk, Schaffer, and Wilk:

My name is Dr. Kathleen Gish. I am an Ohio resident, voter, and educator. I oppose Senate Bill 1 for a multitude of reasons. However, in this testimony, I will focus specifically on the impact it will have on our institutions of higher education.

Some of the most powerful moments of my life have been in classrooms. Being full of curiosity, my own time in college was revelatory. I was introduced to the history of our world, the nuances of culture, the ways of life in faraway lands, the inner-workings of our economic institutions, and the emotion-laden experiences of people long dead. As an educator, I am honored to be able to stand alongside my students as they experience this same euphoria, discovering the complexity and beauty of their world. My students and I are often co-explorers of the magnificent earth on which we live. I believe classrooms to be sacred spaces. What is proposed in this legislation will certainly be the death knell of excellence in our hallowed halls. It will ensure that Ohio will no longer be welcoming or appealing to educators (or, any public employees, for that matter) who are at the top of their fields. Moreover, those students who receive their degrees from higher education institutions in Ohio will be known to have received incomplete and subpar instruction.

The restrictions proposed in SB1 will make colleges and universities unappealing to those seeking a job in higher education, particularly people with an interest in studying the world as it is, rather than as a small group of powerful people wish to portray it. What historian would wish to teach about lynching without condemning it? How does one go about having a Holocaust remembrance event without invoking the horror of discrimination? Is the institution supposed to discuss slavery as if it was morally-neutral?

Additionally, what self-respecting person of color, women, or member of the LGBTQIA+ community would take a position at an institution that is not willing to undertake the task of dismantling racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination? And, I assure you, many of the leading scholars and educators do belong to these communities. The result will be that those who graduate from Ohio colleges and universities will not be able to learn from the best. And, those companies looking for the most well-educated will necessarily have to preclude consideration of those with degrees from Ohio colleges and universities.

I am testifying against SB1 because I believe it will keep Ohio colleges and universities from attracting the leading scholars and educators to our institutions. I believe it will compromise the education provided to students in these higher education institutions. I believe it will alienate industries from investing in Ohio. I believe it will make graduates of our colleges and universities less competitive in the labor market. I believe it shows a willingness on behalf of you, our legislators, to harm Ohioans, hamstring our economy, and compromise our integrity. That you see any messaging that suggests that every person deserves dignity as a bigger threat to

our wellbeing than not being able to afford housing or food illustrates to me how egregiously out of touch you truly are with the needs of our society.

I ask that you vote against SB1 for the sake of our shared futures.

Dr. Kathleen Gish
Dayton, Ohio