

Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 1

Submitted by: Robert Shearer

Date: 02/07/2025

To: Senator Roegner and Members of the Committee

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robert Shearer, and I am writing this letter to express my opinions of Senate Bill 1. Upon reading the bill, I find it to be self contradictory, myopic, and intentionally vague.

The bill espouses “intellectual diversity” while simultaneously forbidding the very practices that result in intellectual diversity. It is not possible to have intellectual diversity without a physically, culturally, and ideologically diverse staff and student body. This is literally the goal of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies that the bill seeks to forbid. The bill also requires the study of specific texts, letters, books, and ideas while forbidding the study of other ideas. The bill mandates that institutions shall “...declare that no hiring, promotion, or admissions process or decision shall encourage, discourage, require, or forbid students, faculty, or administrators to endorse, assent to, or publicly express a given ideology or political stance.” The bill, itself, is in large part a mandate of hiring practices based upon a political stance. There are many other contradictions within the bill such as those listed above. They are too numerous to list.

The bill seeks to mandate specific limitations on tenured staff. Tenured staff already must prove their value to any institution of higher learning. Tenure is not given randomly to unqualified instructors. The Bill’s limitations will eliminate the security that is what makes the best and brightest seek tenure in the first place, making the term all but useless in this state. If Ohio enacts this bill, then this state’s universities will without question miss out on many of the best and brightest instructors, who will simply go to institutions in other states that still grant them the job security that true tenure promises. This incredibly short sighted point of view will cost the future of Ohio, and its institutions dearly.

The bill defines “Controversial belief or policy” as “any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion.” This language is incredibly vague, and will result in yet more political division in Ohio. While the Bill’s authors have obviously listed out some beliefs and policies with which they disagree, the language of the bill leaves the definition of the term wide open for other beliefs and policies that are also “the subject of political controversy.” The definition will most assuredly be used to include other beliefs and policies when the political winds of the state begin to blow in the other direction. The end result will be the censorship of many, many policies that some individual or another has deemed “controversial.” I, for one, believe that the only true way that a student can make up their own minds on an issue is to actually study as many sides of the issue as possible. To censor a student’s ability to learn is to produce an ignorant graduate.

This bill will not do anything to improve-and will do a great deal to harm- the ability of Ohio's institutions of higher learning to produce the best graduates. I therefore believe that it should not be enacted.

Sincerely,

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