

Testimony of Athena Salaba
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
2/9/2025

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

My name is Athena Salaba, and I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

The following are just a few (among many) articles in this Bill that I find problematic, in order of article number and not significance:

4: Requires universities to post course syllabi for every course on institutions' public websites.

As instructors in public institutions and especially those whose programs are accredited, we submit our syllabi to our institutions. Each time, each instructor teaches a section of a course, they create a new syllabus. Requiring the institution to create a website where all syllabi are available will require an enormous number of work hours for staff who are overworked already. If the State will not provide additional funding, then the cost will have to come from other responsibilities that will not be met anymore. I hope that the State of Ohio will consider this in the next budget cycle, as it will require work that does not benefit the students and may result in cutting essential student services.

6: Controversial Beliefs or Policies, which 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" and requires institutions to affirm and declare that faculty and staff will allow students to reach their own conclusions about such topics and will not attempt to indoctrinate any social, political, or religious view.

Educators focus on scientific methods, science, facts, and well-documented concepts on all aspects of a discipline. The mission of education institutions and those who teach is to open the minds of people to become better persons, to learn to respect each other, support each other, grow personally but also contribute to the growth (positive outcomes) of the community and broader society, and equip them with critical thinking skills to assess the information presented to them and make decisions that best address their needs.

Civilized discussion of different aspects and reasonable perceptions is a healthy way to learn and debate, but it should be limited to valid perceptions supported by logic. For example, a "belief" that a male can procreate by striking a lightning rod, has no place in a biology course; a "belief" that environmental changes do not affect the weather will not allow for learning how to innovate the ways we build structures, predict, prepare, prevent catastrophic events, and save lives. There is nothing controversial when it comes to fact vs. fiction, there is nothing controversial between science vs. belief.

8: Bans DEI, i.e., prohibits any diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This includes orientations, training, offices or departments, contracts with third parties to promote DEI, scholarships, or replacing any of the aforementioned with other things that serve similar purposes.

The Bill does not define DEI and will be very exclusionary, which will disadvantage many well-deserving citizens of Ohio. Take for example veterans; this bill eliminates scholarships to veterans, people with disabilities, or people with different learning abilities. This Bill will not allow efforts to recruit and support students who come from families other than the typical privileged ones. Is this what the best for the future of Ohio?

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to exercise my right as a US citizen and submit a written testimony.

Sincerely,
Athena Salaba