Testimony of Fabio Polanco, M.F.A.
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner Chair
February 7, 2025

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

My name is Fabio Polanco, and I am a professor at Kent State University. Before that, I taught at Ashland University where I received the Taylor Excellence in Teaching Award and a commendation from the Ohio State Senate for my instruction and dedication to students. I am also a father of two. I am deeply invested in and concerned about education in our state. I do not represent Kent State University; rather, I am submitting testimony as a private citizen opposing Senate Bill 1.

There are many issues with SB1. It is a threat to collective bargaining. This is not just a threat to faculty but sets a dangerous precedent for all organized labor in Ohio. This bill disempowers labor by eliminating the right to strike and to negotiate important terms of employment including performance reviews, tenure, and retrenchment.

This bill threatens, limits, and chills free speech and academic freedom. Faculty are content experts and students pay to receive and explore the fullness of that content. They do not pay to hear a self or externally censored version that will not prepare them to succeed in their disciplines.

It also signals to many that they are not welcome. We will lose those students, we will lose their tuition dollars, and we will lose them as potential lifelong contributors to our state's economy. I have heard from both college and high school students who say they do not want to go to school or remain in Ohio because of legislation like SB1: legislation that is poised to limit their growth and squelch their success. They are our future. We need to attract them not dissuade them.

There is no crisis in public higher education in Ohio. This bill harms students, harms higher education, and harms Ohio. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this unnecessary bill.