

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

My name is Eli Minshall and I am writing in opposition of Senate Bill 1. I have lived in Ohio my entire life, I have grown up here and gone to school here. I am very concerned about the future of our state and our schools.

SB 1 will require educational institutions to declare that it will not have a stance on any “controversial belief or policy” and that staff must allow students to draw their own conclusions about any controversial belief. In this bill, "Controversial belief or policy" is defined as "any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy". Politics should not decide what is taught in schools. The definition goes on to say “including issues such as climate policies ... or abortion". These topics are not opinions, they are backed by facts, research and data. Climate change is real, it is proven by science. Abortion is essential healthcare, and Ohioans voted in 2023 to amend our constitution to reflect this. This bill is asking teachers not to teach facts.

This bill will prohibit educational institutions from having any diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. This is discriminatory. Diversity is important in education, because different perspectives are how people learn and grow. DEI helps everyone, including women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, veterans, and disabled people. Most people, including members of this committee, fall into at least one of those categories. Furthermore, anyone can become disabled, it is one of, if not the only, protected group that anyone could randomly and immediately join. It is ignorant to think minorities do not struggle more in society than majorities. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential in any workplace and school.

Finally, this bill wants to ban faculty from striking. Striking is an essential tool to fight for proper working conditions and treatment. A faculty strike does not mean students are left out to dry. Faculty at Wright State University in Dayton went on strike in 2019. Wright State offered solutions to students, some classes utilized substitutes or online resources, they were also given the option of switching classes or taking the class in upcoming terms. It may not be ideal, but that's the point, to create pressure to enact change. It worked.

Politicians have been continuously attacking schools and students to further their own ideals, specifically in Ohio by passing HB 8, SB 104, and introducing this bill. In doing so, they are ignoring science, educators, and their own citizens. They are creating confusion and taking away safety and respect from Ohioans. This has to stop. I urge you to oppose this bill.

Thank you,
Eli Minshall