

**Opponent Testimony for SB1
"Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act"**

Senate Higher Education Committee

February 7, 2025

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Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding SB1 and its companion HB6 in the Ohio House. I am submitting this testimony in representation only of myself as an Ohio citizen and concerned parent.

My strongest opposition to the bill concerns Sec. 3345.454 C, which would eliminate undergraduate degree programs conferring fewer than five degrees annually over three years. This provision appears rooted in the flawed assumption that an academic program's value can be reduced to degree output alone. Many smaller programs provide critical support courses for larger disciplines. For example, philosophy departments teach introductory and applied ethics courses for students in nursing, engineering, business, and other fields. They also offer logic, critical reasoning, and science-adjacent courses. I teach *Digital Ethics*, which devotes significant time to ethical AI development. While few students taking this course will graduate with philosophy degrees, the course is clearly both relevant and important for those planning to complete degrees in fields that will increasingly be transformed by AI. Ohio must maintain programs offering these complementary skills to ensure graduates remain competitive.

I also cannot help but to observe that this bill is fundamentally at odds with itself. A major part seeks to curtail efforts to promote diversity while also repeatedly promoting intellectual diversity. It presumes that intellectual diversity is good, while other kinds of diversity are without educational value. Both of these presumptions are false, or at least shallow. Intellectual diversity is not valuable if it merely consists in a plurality of opinions. What is of value is the way diverse perspectives are grounded in different experiences, evidence, reasons, forms of creativity, and ways of thinking. This is precisely what initiatives promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion are aimed at fostering. However, I realize that making these points is fruitless, given the current administration's determination to mandate elimination of DEI initiatives.