

Testimony of Dan Overfield, MLIS

Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 11, 2025

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

My name is Dan Overfield, and I am a graduate of Ohio University. I am also a parent to three children, all of whom are attending, or will soon attend, college. I am also a member of a Cuyahoga Community College where we have a successful shared governance model allowing faculty work alongside our administrative leadership to ensure that, to the best of our collective abilities, all decisions are made in the best interests of the students. Every three years we renegotiate the terms of our contract with the College and these refinements, along with our standard contractual obligations to ensure continuous improvement, respectful classroom dialog, and our no-strike / walkout clause, guarantee that the students are prioritized in every decision.

Our new contract, just signed in the Summer of 2024, is evidence that our model of operation is ideal to both students and our institution overall.

Changing the law in a way that would nullify significant parts of our contract serves no student focused priority. If a bargaining group cannot negotiate the terms of their labor contract in good faith, with the ability to strike in the absence of a contract, then all faculty contributions to the shared governance model will be weakened. The more voices that contribute to a solution or a decision helps ensure that it is the correct decision. Removing faculty ability to share responsibility for the College's success will damage confidence and morale.

If Senate Bill 1 advances, and becomes law, my younger two children will be encouraged to attend college in a state that respects academic freedom and that understands the value of open and frank discussions in the classroom. College is the ideal time for our future leaders to have controversial discussions and to debate and study difficult topics. Attempts to constrain this process will yield weaker outcomes. Shielding students from considering the future's challenges will not prepare them to address these issues with strength.

Suggesting that faculty impart their own allegedly liberal biases onto classrooms is illogical given the results of our statewide elections since at least 2016.

I urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 1. I am submitting my comments as a private citizen.