

Testimony of Erin Allen, Ph.D. and Lecturer at Ohio State University
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 10, 2025

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

My name is Erin Allen, and I am a lecturer in the School of Music at Ohio State University where I have taught as both a graduate teaching assistant and as a lecturer. I do not represent Ohio State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

This legislation assumes that there is no intellectual diversity in Ohio higher education, and that certain viewpoints are censored. This is patently untrue. There is a considerable amount of intellectual diversity at my institution. My students are from a wide range of backgrounds and have many different experiences and opinions. The courses and topics of study I teach are based in many years of study and research and I present them in such a way as to promote critical, open thinking and curiosity. It is my aim as an instructor to help students think critically and be able to clearly and effectively communicate their own ideas and opinions, and use the knowledge they have gained in order to address problems and issues.

Second, this legislation assumes that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are harmful to academic institutions. This idea is incorrect. DEI initiatives do not silence opposing voices or segregate communities. Our institution is full of diverse students, faculty, staff, and other community members. Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives work to make sure that such diversity is supported in all its forms for all students, faculty, and staff.

As a recent PhD student at Ohio State University for example, I was able to complete my degree program with the social and financial support of a program that supports parenting students, located in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at Ohio State University. Without such an initiative, I would have had to quit my degree program after the birth of my son. Eliminating such DEI initiatives would have, in fact, segregated me from my academic community and silenced my academic voice – the opposite of this legislation’s stated goals.

This legislation’s attempts to surveil teaching and learning at the University is absolutely inappropriate. Publicly publishing syllabi opens up faculty to undue criticism from non-specialists members of the public and invites harassment. Moreover, it quashes academic freedom.

Finally, the provisions preventing collective bargaining by faculty is anti-union. Faculty deserve the right the advocate for their own working conditions, and are already subject to annual reviews and assessments.

This bill is harmful. I urge you to consider my testimony and vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

Erin Allen, PhD