

Opponent testimony for Ohio Senate Bill 1  
Higher Education Committee  
2/10/2024  
Martin Welych-Flanagan

Chair Kristina Roegner, Vice Chair Jerry Cirino, Ranking Member Catherine Ingram, and members of the Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for reading my testimony on Senate Bill 1. My name is Martin Welych-Flanagan, a current graduate student at the University of Cincinnati. I moved to Ohio several years ago for the great educational opportunities this state offers. I was thrilled to be able to study at the University of Cincinnati, one of the foremost universities in the entire country for paleontology. However, this bill is threatening the very things that drew me to Ohio, and so I feel compelled to speak out as an individual. As a geoscientist and educator, I oppose this bill on both practical and principled levels.

On a practical level, this bill requires universities and university employees comply with a series of vague new regulations and nebulous policies. The risk of spurious investigations will make university administration and employees far more reticent to do many of the tasks necessary for the operation of a university. This limiting of options and increasing workload would either decrease the educational standards for students or necessitate additional manhours, increasing the cost for Ohioans.

On a principled level, I am a strong believer in scientific truth and academic freedom. Science is, at a fundamental level, a set of systems for evaluating possible truths. By mandating that us educators must teach both sides of so-called “controversial” topics, such as climate change, it is preventing us from accurately teaching what the process of science has shown to be true. Within the scientific community, there is no controversy on climate change. Thus, this bill would force us to teach an unscientific position denying the reality of human-caused climate change in same way we teach the scientific consensus. By stipulating that we cannot teach the true scientific consensus, our duty as educators cannot be fulfilled. I ask that you please consider my testimony and preserve the educational institutions of Ohio by voting no on this bill. Thank you for your time.