

Testimony of Eugenia R. Romero, Ph.D
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 9, 2025

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

My name is Eugenia Romero, and I am a professor of Iberian Studies in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Ohio State University, where I have taught for over 20 years. I do not represent Ohio State University but rather am submitting opposing testimony to Senate Bill 1 as a private citizen and as a parent of a college-bound student. This bill poses significant threats to freedom of speech and to the ability to seek and learn about various perspectives and opinions.

By introducing measures that restrict the topics students can study, this bill jeopardizes our institutions' commitment to effectively serving students. As a parent, I am deeply concerned that my child—and any college student for that matter—will not receive a higher education that provides a pathway to opportunities and knowledge. SB1 will create barriers to information and different perspectives, preventing college students from forming their own opinions based on truthful and accurate information.

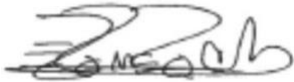
One of the most alarming aspects of this bill is its potential to limit academic freedom and critical discussions in higher education. Education should encourage the robust exchange of ideas. By stifling this exchange, SB1 undermines the very purpose of higher education, which is to prepare students to think critically about the world and equip them with the tools to become competitive professionals in a fast-evolving global market. Moreover, the proposed measures could disproportionately affect historically marginalized students, including women. Access to higher education is crucial for promoting social mobility, and any legislation that restricts access will only widen the gap between those with resources and those without.

We should be fostering a broad educational environment that embraces a wide range of thoughts, experiences, and qualifications, rather than erecting barriers that hinder student success. Additionally, this bill is redundant in relation to existing universities' practices, such as curriculum development, student evaluations, and syllabus creation, to name a few. Assigning more work to faculty means less time to effectively perform our responsibilities as scholars and educators. My child often asks why I work so much. My job does not end when I leave the classroom; I serve on several committees and mentor my students to become independent thinkers who draw their own conclusions. I have approached parenting in the same way: I have never censored what my child reads, watches, or listens to, and I take pride in their development as an open-minded individual with a thirst for knowledge. This is what I hope for my child as they start college, and it is what I want for all my students.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider the provisions outlined in Ohio Senate Bill 1. Instead of promoting an environment of innovation and growth within our higher education system, this bill risks creating obstacles that could harm the future of our students and, consequently, the future of

our state. By diverting money, time, and attention from student learning to unnecessary bureaucracy, this legislation will make it more challenging to attract students and faculty to Ohio institutions. Ultimately, Ohio may become even less competitive economically, exacerbating the “brain drain.” I urge you to vote against this bill to protect higher education and ensure that our state universities continue to offer pathways to opportunity for all Ohioans, preventing the loss of students and highly qualified scholars to other states that promote and encourage freedom of thought and knowledge.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Eugenia R. Romero", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eugenia R. Romero, Ph.D.