

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

Tuesday, February 11th

**Kate Budd,
Professor of Art,
The University of
Akron**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Kate Budd. I am a Professor of Art, and the chair of faculty senate at the University of Akron. I do not represent UA, I am here to speak against the anti-collective bargaining measures in Senate Bill 1 as an individual.

Removing faculty's right to strike or bargain doesn't lead to peaceful campuses, working together to solve our mutual problems does.

In 2020, the UA administration asserted that the Covid pandemic had impacted the university's finances so badly that they had to make a reduction in force (or RIF) of 97 faculty.

Akron-AAUP believed that a RIF was unnecessary and would damage UA's academic mission, leading to a catastrophic drop in enrollment. But we were under contract and bound by a "no strike" clause. Our only hope for leverage at the table and to mitigate the damage of a RIF was to go public.

We held raucous rallies, saturated social media and got the attention of national and international news organizations. None of this public ugliness had any impact at the negotiating table and 97 faculty were ultimately RIF'd. The faculty-Administration relationship was the worst I have seen in 26 years, morale across campus was terrible and I am sure the RIF and the public fight over it drove students away.

In early 2021, we negotiated a new contract. Our previous contract had expired and we could legally strike; this gave our team some leverage and we negotiated a contract that both sides could agree to. To avoid the need for another RIF, the chapter recognized that the Administration had to be able to respond to rapidly changing circumstances, and we worked together to create a retrenchment article that made it easier to reduce faculty when necessary.

In November 2024, UA announced their intent to retrench 38 faculty. I am in one of the affected departments, and while being retrenched is stressful and difficult, the process is transparent and gives faculty the opportunity to provide evidence in support of their case. And

unlike the RIF, which terminated positions the same day people were notified, we have a longer period of notice. This is vital given how specialized the academic job market is and how long it takes to find a new position.

Note that there has been little to no public fighting.

Removing faculty's right to strike doesn't lead to peaceful campuses. At The University of Akron, collective bargaining has allowed faculty and administration to work together to find solutions to our common problems.

I ask that you consider my testimony and vote no on Senate Bill 1.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions.