

Testimony of Prof. Phoebe Reeves, MFA
Opponent Testimony for SB1
Higher Education Committee
February 9th, 2025

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

My name is Phoebe Reeves, and I am a professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, where I have taught for 19 years. I do not represent the University and am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1. I love teaching, and come from a family of teachers, preachers, and others who taught me early on to value knowledge, community, and honesty.

I am saddened by the hostility this bill displays toward Ohio's educators and students. It would make my job more difficult every day and would create an atmosphere of distrust and paranoia on campuses across the state. The big-government overreach of this bill, including the burden of unfunded mandates, would make it more difficult for Ohio's Universities and Colleges to teach critical skills and information to our upcoming generation of citizens. In my time teaching, I have had the privilege to work with so many passionate, intelligent students. I believe that they are fully capable of navigating the complex world of others' opinions without interference from politicians who have never run a classroom, staffed a tutoring session, taught a lab, or submitted a research grant.

It is a teacher's job to open up the world of knowledge and possibility to our students, not to indoctrinate, intimidate, or narrow their experience. SB1 will only politicize our classrooms, and put us at risk from extremists, by requiring our personal contact information on public sites. Fear, censorship, and intimidation will drive bright minds, both teachers and students, away from our wonderful centers of learning.

I strongly oppose SB 1, in addition, for now being the most anti-union piece of legislation this state has seen since SB5. Contrary to the opinions of some, tenure is not a "job for life," but only the guarantee of due process. Universities already work with their professors to implement fair procedures to deal with any individuals who do not meet our high standards in teaching and research, or professional behavior. The limitations and demands that SB 1 imposes will weaken those processes and poison those collegial relationships, to the detriment of our students, our communities, and our ability to produce economically beneficial research. This legislation will not improve the quality of education in our state and will instead result in students and faculty leaving the state for other, more equitable institutions of higher learning.

Please, reconsider the substance of this bill, and instead of censoring and limiting Ohio's talented Universities, support them with adequate funding, fewer unfunded mandates, and appropriate financial resources for our wonderful students—they are the ones who will one day be designing our buildings and bridges, administering us our medicine, teaching our grandchildren, and discovering the next levels of knowledge. They deserve our fullest support and admiration.