

Testimony of Daniel Piccolo, DMA
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
Tuesday, February 11, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify in writing today. My name is Dan Piccolo. I am a resident of Wood County, a parent, an active member of my community, and I am an Associate Professor of Music at Bowling Green State University, where I have taught since 2016. I do not represent BGSU, but am submitting my testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I am strongly opposed to this bill and its companion bill in the Ohio House. This bill represents a dangerous trend in our democracy, whereby legislators embrace the polarization and tribalism of our current political landscape, weaponizing the legislative process for their own political gain rather than protecting the individual freedoms of *all* Ohioans. This includes the faculty members who would, through the passage of SB 1, see limits placed on their rights of free speech and academic freedom, but also their students, who would have their right to an intellectually rigorous education infringed upon.

Let me be clear: I am strongly opposed to *any* legislation that limits free speech or academic freedom, and SB 1 does just that. Limiting the subject matter that can be taught at the highest levels of education in our state is a slippery slope. SB 1 claims to protect “intellectual diversity,” yet it establishes vague parameters about controversial beliefs that would leave students and faculty vulnerable to the political whims of whatever individual or body is evaluating those beliefs. In my experience, the interrogation of controversial beliefs is an essential role of higher education in our society. It should be obvious that these aspects of the bill will have the opposite effect to their stated intent.

At the same time, in a startling contradiction, the bill bans any training on “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.” It is here that this legislation exposes its true nature as a shameless partisan appeal to a portion of Ohioans who share an extreme, draconian political dogma. In fact, such measures are essential to ensuring that our colleges and universities are a marketplace of ideas where *anyone* can participate.

The bill also suggests the establishment of onerous and unnecessary administrative tasks for faculty, especially senior faculty. Post-tenure review, evaluation of workload policies, and other such tasks will take substantial time from faculty who should be devoting their time to teaching and research. Again, this aspect of the bill exposes its true intent as a direct attack on faculty and institutions due to their perceived ideological leanings. Having worked in higher education for over a decade, I can assure you that the vast majority of faculty members are incredibly hard-working and highly qualified. In reality, by burdening faculty with needless busy work this will only serve to weaken students’ education and limit valuable research productivity that is of tremendous benefit to our society.

Finally, the elements of this bill that limit faculty members collectively bargaining rights are extremely concerning. I am fortunate to have worked at BGSU since the adoption of the first Collective Bargaining Agreement, but many of my colleagues have told me how challenging things were before this was possible. It is our right to bargain with the university administration as a collective.

I ask you to consider my testimony, as well as the many opposing testimonies you will hear today, and vote NO on this harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Dan Piccolo