

Testimony of Cathleen Rossman, PhD
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 Dr. Cathleen Rossman, and I am an associate professor of Mathematics at Cuyahoga Community College, where I have taught for 14 years. I do not represent Cuyahoga Community College but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen and parent of school-aged children in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I stand in opposition to Senate Bill 1 because it represents an unprecedented overreach into higher education, undermining academic freedom, faculty governance, and the ability of institutions to prepare students for a globalized world.

This bill limits tenure protections, which is concerning to an educator who has worked under four different associate deans and three college presidents. We professors have remained in our positions because we are dedicated to our students. The bill also forces a distorted definition of intellectual diversity that could hinder evidence-based teaching. It seeks to micromanage course syllabi and eliminate vital diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives that create more accessible and equitable learning environments. As a mathematics professor, I aim to give students the tools they need to navigate our ever-increasingly complex world. Most troublingly, it threatens institutional funding based on vague ideological metrics. The content and topics we teach at Cuyahoga Community College must already meet the standards of the Ohio Department of Higher Education. By further dictating how and what we teach, this bill weakens Ohio's ability to attract top-tier educators and students.

As a parent, I want my children to receive the best education possible, one that prepares them to think critically, engage in meaningful discourse, and navigate an increasingly diverse world. This bill seeks to inject political oversight into university curriculums, stripping institutions of their ability to provide a robust and independent education. My goal for my children is to receive a top-tier education where they can learn, thrive, be included and include others, and experience equal opportunities. I want Ohio to be that place where my children can receive such an education and find meaningful careers, but this bill jeopardizes that possibility. If we do not encourage our children to remain in Ohio for their secondary education, the economic status of the colleges and universities will be weakened. In addition, these same students may not return to Ohio for their jobs and careers, which also weakens the economy in Ohio.

The success of Ohio's higher education system depends on intellectual freedom, not political mandates. I have taught students under both Republican and Democrat leaders. I do not modify my teaching style based on the president, governor, senators, and other state-wide leaders. My goal is to prepare students to use quantitative information to solve problems and make their own decisions once they leave my classroom. I urge you to oppose this bill in the interest of our students, our institutions, and the future of Ohio's workforce. Please vote against Senate Bill 1.