

Testimony of Dr. Felicia Denaud  
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee  
February 10, 2024

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dr. Felicia Denaud and I am an Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Cincinnati teaching a range of courses that center Black social and political thought. I received my B.A in African American Studies and Sociology from Columbia University and my doctorate in Africana Studies from Brown University with a focus in History, Politics, and Theory. This is to say, this is to emphasize, that I was reared by the intellectual gift we call Africana Studies while moving through the founding and most rigorous models of American higher education.

I am adamantly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6. I trust my colleagues to deepen our understanding of the harmful and predatory particularities of this bill, line by line, clause by clause. I wish to use my time to do something different.

Let us return to the summer of 1964. Freedom Summer. I want to use my time to remind the State of Ohio -- the teachers, the workers, the students of Ohio -- the centrality of this land and people to the world-wide freedom struggle for truth and justice. Freedom Summer 1964 was an unprecedented people's front focused on registering African American voters in Mississippi. The campaign was organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). I currently work with SNCC veterans and the SNCC Legacy Project. Why is this relevant?

Hundreds and hundreds of students from across the United States convened at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio (now part of the esteemed Miami University) to train and prepare for the multi-racial struggle that was to unfold across the cities and farmlands of Mississippi. Training included nonviolent resistance workshops, deep and difficult inter-racial and inter-generational discussion, as well as psychological

preparation for white supremacist terror and the fact that freedom fighters would be injured, maimed, and that some would die, as they in fact did.

The world-historical change that this generation of Americans stewarded would be nearly unteachable under the conditions that will result from this bill. The truth of the freedom struggle will be subject to an intellectual surveillance that is cowardly. *I fear no knowledge because I am free.* Ohio has always been at the forefront of intellectual inquiry of this kind. The Southern Freedom Struggle was a social, political, cultural, and intellectual revolution. Without Ohio, in more ways than I can detail now, critical figures like MLK and Rev. James Lawson would not have encountered one another. The freedom fighters, like the brave abolitionists before them, would not have had a vital, open, and curious space to change the world. I will continue to teach this history no matter where I end up. By either bureaucratic or ideological censure, I may not be here next year. The people of Ohio deserve to know, to learn their true history without fear or fearmongering.

Thank you.

*[Then tell them why! Make it short and sweet - a few paragraphs is perfect. Tell a personal story. Or explain why your job experience gives you this perspective on the bill. Maybe cite some statistics or case studies to back up your claims]*

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this  
[*harmful/extremist/discriminatory/destructive/etc*] bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

[*If you are testifying in-person*] I will now take any questions you may have.