

Opponent Testimony for SB1  
Senate Higher Education Committee  
February 10, 2025

Paige Webb, Citizen of Ohio

Chair Kristina Roegner, Vice Chair Jerry Cirino, Ranking Member Catherine D. Ingram  
and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Paige Webb, and I have been an Ohio resident for most of my life; raised my son here, who is currently an OSU student; and have been an educator in Ohio for over a decade, teaching high school and college students at both public and private institutions. I speak on behalf of myself in strong opposition to SB1 in its entirety.

There are many issues to address in higher education, such as soaring tuition costs, and this bill does not address any of them. SB1 states its aim is to promote “intellectual diversity” and yet its effects would do exactly the opposite in its attempt to quell free discussion and debate on “controversial ideas and concepts” while enabling government overreach to dictate college curriculum and procedures, such as the imposition of an American civics course with government-selected texts. The bill lacks clear definition of key terms such as “diversity,” which is contradictorily both a “controversial idea or concept” (lines 601-603) and a mandate within the phrase “intellectual diversity,” to name one example. The bill’s contradictions and lack of clarity—paired with its threats to funding, faculty jobs, and program elimination—will inevitably lead to faculty and students restricting what they say in the classroom out of fear it might fall into the bill’s murky purview. If even a basic fact – such as “the Earth is round” – becomes a controversial belief, then the state of Ohio’s higher education future is truly hanging in the balance.

SB1 would also create serious safety concerns for faculty and students in its syllabus posting requirement. Under SB1’s syllabus requirement, this is what could unfold: I’m teaching a poetry course in which we read texts written by non-white authors, and/or authors who are female or have a disability; I post the syllabus online, as required, which has my contact information and the meeting schedule for the class. Anyone in the public can decide that such course texts fall into SB1’s murky definition of “diversity” and could harass our class session or worse. This is only one example of how SB1 would negatively impact higher education, driving away Ohio’s best and brightest faculty and students.

The most chilling aspect of this bill is that it attempts to legislate intellectual freedom, to control higher education on micro and macro levels, severely limiting our capacity as instructors to teach the

critical thinking skills that enable students to “reach their own [informed] conclusions,” (lines 62-55) as desired by SB1. This bill would severely diminish my and other instructors’ ability to do our jobs.

This bill, under SB83, was overwhelmingly opposed by students, faculty, and citizens; its new version, SB1, is opposed just as fervently. If passed, SB1 will push the most promising students and faculty to out-of-state institutions. For myself and my family, that is already a consideration. As a result, this bill would undermine the future of Ohio’s economy of which public higher education institutions, particularly OSU, influence.

I oppose SB1 because I care deeply about the education of our students and the future of our communities. I ask that you consider my testimony and vote no on SB1. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Paige Webb