

Testimony of Mark McKinney, Ph.D.
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair
February 9, 2025

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

My name is Mark McKinney. I am a professor of French at Miami University, where I have taught since 1994. I do not represent Miami University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1. This bill, if it is signed into law and takes effect, will have a devastating impact on higher education in the state of Ohio. Ohio's public universities depend to a great extent on the tuition dollars of out-of-state students who are attracted to the excellent education currently offered by the state universities of Ohio. One reason why Ohio needs those out-of-state tuition dollars is the low percentage of funding within university operating budgets that is allocated by the Ohio Legislature. Another is the long-term decline in the number of college-age students in Ohio. The radical and misguided changes to higher education that this bill is designed to bring about would lead many, perhaps the majority, of out-of-state students to steer clear of Ohio's universities, and instead seek educational opportunities elsewhere. Ohio's own best and brightest college students with the means to do so will also likely leave the state and enroll elsewhere, if this bill should become law. This legislation would also ensure that the best-qualified researchers and teachers currently employed by Ohio's public universities will seek better employment opportunities in other states, and that Ohio's public universities will no longer be able to attract the most talented university teachers and researchers from other states and countries. Another way in which this legislation would harm the universities in a directly quantifiable way is through the loss of alumni contributions. University endowments will therefore surely suffer. Many corporations would also no longer envision relocating to Ohio, because of the decline in the quality of education brought about by the proposed law. The bill would thereby surely and largely weaken Ohio's public universities. The proposed law will also greatly add to the administrative costs of our universities. It is clearly designed to suppress the free discussion and debate of ideas in the classrooms of Ohio's public universities, while dishonestly purporting to do precisely the opposite. Its proposed elimination of tenure is an attempt to eviscerate academic freedom, a liberty without which there can be no high-quality university education. This legislation recalls the legal prescriptions and prohibitions of authoritarian political regimes and movements from other places and other times. The bill is also an attack on union rights, one that will be resisted by labor unions across the state. It would not make Ohio great in any way; instead, it would surely and quickly diminish the standing of Ohio across the United States and abroad, and would trigger a rapid decline in the reputation and resources of Ohio's public universities. I therefore respectfully request that all Members of the Committee vote no on the bill, or that it be withdrawn permanently from consideration.