

Testimony of Terry Filicko
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
Written testimony submitted February 9, 2025

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

My name is Terry Filicko. I am a professor at Clark State College, where I have taught for twelve years. I teach political science courses as well as the College Success course. In my courses, I meet students from all majors, heading on to university educations and into the workforce, and from a wide range of religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. It is also my honor to serve as Chair of the Ohio Faculty Senate of Community and Technical Colleges. I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1; I do not represent Clark State College.

Community colleges in Ohio provide programming in technical education, lower-division baccalaureate education, applied baccalaureate education, developmental education, and continuing education. My testimony is to draw attention to four concerns as to how the proposed legislation has the potential to constrain community college faculty in pursuit of this mission and to undermine the educational and career prospects for our students. Specifically, the proposed bill in its current form would undermine:

1. faculty responsibility for curricular decisions;
2. faculty responsibility for ensuring the integrity and quality of faculty appointment and promotion procedures;
3. institutional and program responsibility to external accrediting bodies; and
4. our ability to prepare students to join the workforce, specifically to pursue careers in the growing industries in the region.

I would direct your attention to a resolution of the Faculty Congress of Ohio which was submitted in opposition to Senate Bill 83 in the previous session of the General Assembly. The Faculty Congress is the body which combines the Ohio Faculty Senate, which represents community and technical college faculty, and the Ohio Faculty Council, which represents our public university colleagues. In that resolution, you will see that faculty were united in our opposition to that bill, and our sentiments have not changed. Specifically, the Faculty Congress of Ohio noted that

- the legislative items under consideration by our elected officials are designed to regulate academic programs and faculty, and as such are examples of unnecessary overreach that will create additional layers of bureaucracy, costing taxpayers more money and damaging the success and competitiveness of our students and graduates; [and]
- legislative initiatives to unduly monitor and limit discussion, debate and diversity in our esteemed institutions of higher education damage the intellectual contributions of our faculty, infringing upon students, graduates and academic institutions.

I draw your attention to the role that accreditation plays for our institutions and programs. All of our institutions go through regular reaccreditation review from external bodies, such as the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Without that accreditation for our institutions, students may not be eligible for federal financial aid and their credits might not transfer. The accreditation standards **require** commitment to academic freedom, faculty evaluation processes, and course and program evaluation

and assessment. We all have policies and procedures in place to ensure the integrity of our institutions, and we take them seriously. If the legislature steps in to mandate policies, our status as fully accredited institutions is at risk.

We want our students to be prepared to enter the workforce. Awareness of and preparation to participate in a diverse workforce is essential. Having faculty who are trained in diversity, equity, and inclusion helps us prepare our students. For example, both Intel and Honda prominently feature their commitments to diversity on their websites:

- Intel notes that “[d]iversity and inclusion are instrumental in driving innovation and delivering strong business growth.”ⁱ
- Honda explains that “[s]ameness doesn’t work in a product line and it doesn’t work in a workforce. That’s why from the beginning, Honda has strived to bring people from different cultures, backgrounds, races, genders and sexual orientations together.”ⁱⁱ

To summarize, Senate Bill 1 will compromise our ability to deliver quality higher education and workforce development for our students:

- It will add considerable administrative costs at both the institutional level and at the Ohio Department of Higher Education, costs which are not sustainable at a time of declining state revenues and declining enrollment.
- It will undermine institutional accreditation particularly on issues of faculty control of curriculum, faculty responsibility for appointment and promotion, and institutional responsibility for shared governance; and
- It will diminish the quality of education for our students by removing curricular decisions from content experts.

I conclude with the last part of the Faculty Congress of Ohio resolution:

Be it further resolved that the Faculty Congress of Ohio strongly opposes legislative actions designed to micromanage our campuses and classrooms, and further commits to working with the relevant committees in the Ohio House and Ohio Senate to continue to ensure the best educational opportunities for all of our students.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

ⁱ <https://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/diversity/diversity-at-intel.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://csr.honda.com/diversity/>