

February 9, 2025

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

I am a citizen in Ohio who is strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

I am a college professor who teaches student affairs and higher education. The primary focus of my courses revolve around social justice, inclusion of all students, and the premise that if students find community and belonging on a college campus, they are more likely to matriculate the graduation. SB 1 is largely problematic and I would like to articulate some core reasons why in the paragraphs below.

First, prior to becoming a faculty member, I worked at several colleges and universities in alumni and advancement. I have conducted trustee trainings for new trustees. These are costly and time consuming. This unfunded mandate will require resources from public universities in Ohio that will drain resources from students.

Second, the controversial beliefs or policies section's definition is broad and I cannot fathom being able to conduct civil discourse in my classroom without the ability to teach about historical events that have happened if a student decides that it did not happen. For example, if a student does not believe that the Holocaust really happened (a fact) then I would have no ability to guide or redirect the discussion to facts. Further, in the specific work that I do with college students, there are actual correct and incorrect answers. If a student draws their own conclusions about a topic related to social, political, or religious views (which encompasses essentially every aspect of learning), then I would have no ability as a professor to correct the inaccuracies. This undermines the educational process.

Third, I have taught diversity, equity and inclusion courses (part of my program's core curriculum) for well over a decade. Without my graduate students having the ability to understand these concepts, they will not be able to appropriately serve students on college campuses in their roles. This will have a detrimental impact on graduation rates and matriculation, thus leading to decline in the educated workforce eventually. Further, SB 1 proposes a colorblind approach related to racism. Race and sex are important parts of our society. Banning discussion of systemic racism, inherited wealth, white privilege, etc. will not adequately train our workforce to understand history and how aspects of our world intersect and diverge. Additionally, many student organizations on college campuses, one of the pillars of the collegiate experience that fosters belonging, leadership, and growth, will be forced to disband because often these groups build community among minoritized groups of students.

Lastly, there are many encroaching aspects of this bill that erode academic freedom and tenure. SB 1 places too much power in the commissioner for higher education. It also will dramatically stagnate development and innovation, and cause my students to lose job opportunities due to not being trained to field standards.

This testimony is my own and I ask that you vote NO on SB 1.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

Amy E. French, Ph.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy French". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.