Testimony of Dr. Michael J. Levin, PhD
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 9, 2025

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

My name is Dr. Michael J. Levin, and I am a professor of History at the University of Akron, where I have taught for 25 years. I do not represent the University of Akron, but rather I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

The idea of censoring what I as a History teacher can say or discuss in my classroom is appalling, absurd, and extremely dangerous. It is also un-American. Our students deserve the truth, however uncomfortable it might be. Let me give a personal example of why I am so angered by the proposed SB 1.

Since 2019, I have regularly taught a course called "The History of Anti-Semitism." I was moved to create this course after the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh in October 2018. As a Jewish person and as an educator, I decided that I needed to directly address the roots of anti-Semitism, in America and elsewhere, to help combat the rise of hatred that led to the tragedy in Pittsburgh (as well as many other similar incidents).

This course has become one of the most rewarding, if emotionally draining, courses that I have taught in my 25 years at the University of Akron. I have gotten universally positive feedback from the students, many of whom came into the class knowing next to nothing about the historical roots of anti-Semitism. Many students have told me that this course has changed their lives. It is the one time they have had an opportunity to talk about extremely difficult topics like bigotry, racism, and prejudice, in a safe space like the college classroom.

This is exactly the kind of class students should be able to take as part of their college experience. And it is exactly the kind of class that would become impossible to teach under the new rules that have been proposed in SB 1.

I urge you to vote against this measure. It is unnecessary, unpopular, and extremist. History and scholarship is about hearing many voices and many perspectives. History teaches us that censorship is never the answer. Please do not give in to fear and anger, which are the emotions driving this bill. Our future depends on it.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Levin