

Testimony of Dr. Henry W. Young, Jr., Professor of Communication Studies

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. Henry W. Young, Jr., Professor of Communication Studies at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, where I have taught for over 20 years. This is my own testimony drawn from my professional college teaching experience of nearly 30 years. I do not represent Cuyahoga Community College, but rather, I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I am writing to persuade you that SB1 will damage the ability of Ohio's colleges, universities, and community colleges to build the best learning environments for their students.

My main concern with SB1 is the damage I believe it will cause to the collaborative, engaged nature of the community college. Administrators and faculty at community colleges collaborate in ways to create an environment for student success. This involves collaborative committee work and engagement to improve the student experience, so a well-rounded and informed student is hopefully promoted and/ or graduated to achieve their personal and professional goals. It appears that SB1 will stifle faculty voices since many of its provisions would eliminate protections that currently provide faculty confidence in sharing openly with administrators and students. In other words, academic freedom would be eliminated and faculty communication policed.

I believe that it is important to remember that colleges and universities are not indoctrination machines where students are brainwashed with various ideas. College and universities are institutions that should allow students to take various courses and in many disciplines in order to develop their critical thinking skills,

and to become proficient working professionals who contribute to their community and society.

Personally speaking, I am a community college graduate, and I value the well-rounded education that I received. I was able to take various courses, learn many things, experience many new things, and meet people outside of my family and community group. I was not given talking points from any perspective. I was encouraged to have my own thoughts and opinions, and I was encouraged to always be curious and open to others. I believe that most of us who teach at colleges and universities believe and function as I do. We only want the best for our students. If SB1 becomes a fact in the state of Ohio, all of this will go away because faculty will begin operating under a cloud of suspicion and fear. The freedom to teach content as it should be taught will go away, and students will basically get scripted material that is monitored by the state.

For the above stated reasons, I express my opposition to SB1.