

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill One
Elizabeth Kenyon PhD, Associate Professor of Social Studies Education
Kent State University
Senate Higher Education Committee
February 8, 2025

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

Thank you for receiving my written testimony. My name is Elizabeth Kenyon.

I come today writing in strong opposition to Senate Bill One

I come as a citizen, a social studies teacher educator, and as a parent of children who attend public schools in Ohio. While I am on the social studies education faculty at Kent State University, I do not represent Kent State University, but rather am submitting my testimony as a private citizen.

Senate Bill One will not only have a negative impact on Ohio's great state university system, it will also contribute to the teacher shortage problem in the state of Ohio.

As a teacher educator, it is my responsibility to prepare college students to meet the needs of Ohio's young learners. These learners come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, some of which have made success in school more challenging. A crucial part of ensuring that teachers are best able to address these challenges is for them to understand the historical and systemic issues that exist in our society. In doing this work, I am very careful to be fair and accurate in all I teach and to focus on systems, not people. However, Senate Bill One would have a chilling effect on the work I do.

My primary concern is the removal of all supports for students that might be in some way based on an identity. I personally know many students from marginalized groups who have only succeeded in our program because of our office of diversity and outreach and because of scholarships and programming explicitly designed to support them. This programming supports students with many identities including first generation students, most of whom are white, as well as others. These former students are currently working in Ohio public schools, often in areas where teachers are hard to hire and keep. They are providing crucial representation for their students. The support they relied on as students would no longer exist under SB 1.

My research focuses on the barriers that marginalized students face in teacher education programs. Scholarships, tutoring, summer programs, places to go for support, are all proved supports to help these students get through teacher education programs and go on to be successful and productive members of their communities, not to mention incredible educators. Senate Bill One would prohibit universities from providing these crucial supports.

Again, as a citizen of Ohio, and as a social studies educator, I urge you to oppose Senate Bill One.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Kenyon

Associate Professor of Social Studies Education
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