

Testimony of Haidy Kamel, Ph.D  
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee  
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair  
February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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

My name is Haidy Kamel. I serve as the president of the American Association of University Professors, Cuyahoga Community College Chapter. I am here today to share my experience and to urge you to reconsider the damage that Senate Bill 1 will inflict on our students, our workforce, and Ohio's future.

I wish to draw your attention to our students at Cuyahoga Community College, the largest community college in Northeast Ohio and the oldest community college in the state of Ohio. Our students come from all walks of life. Many balance full-time jobs, family responsibilities, and financial challenges while pursuing their education. Others are returning to school after years in the workforce, looking to re-learn and reskill for new careers. Regardless of their path, one thing remains constant: **having experienced, committed faculty makes a difference in whether they succeed.**

But Ohio is on the verge of making that harder. SB 1 threatens the stability of our colleges by undermining the very structure that allows faculty to do their jobs effectively. The real effect of SB1 will be to weaken faculty retention creating an environment of instability, driving experienced educators away from Ohio's institutions. Faculty retention is already a challenge, particularly in the STEM fields. Across the country, we face a shortage of STEM educators, and higher education cannot compete with private-sector salaries. A recent report from the American Association of Community Colleges notes that "community colleges face enormous challenges as they strive to find and retain qualified educators in the high-demand stem fields". The National Science Board has also warned that STEM workforce shortages are growing, with 2.5 million additional STEM-related job openings projected by 2031, far outpacing the availability of qualified educators to train students for these careers. At Tri-C, we are always searching for faculty in the School of Nursing and Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering where faculty are essential to guiding students through rigorous coursework and providing mentorship.

This bill also weakens Ohio's workforce. Community colleges are more than academic institutions; they are economic engines that power Ohio's industries. We provide training for in-demand careers in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, information technology, and other high-growth fields. Our graduates fill critical workforce gaps, ensuring that Ohio businesses remain competitive.

But workforce development does not happen in a vacuum. It requires highly skilled, long-term faculty who understand industry needs and can develop programs that align with employer expectations. Faculty build relationships with local businesses, create apprenticeship opportunities, and ensure students are prepared for high-paying jobs right here in Ohio. When faculty positions are destabilized, our ability to maintain these partnerships is weakened, and our workforce pipeline suffers.

If SB1 forces out experienced faculty, Ohio will face an even greater skills gap. Losing STEM and technical faculty means fewer trained graduates entering the workforce. The result? Businesses will struggle to find qualified workers, jobs will go unfilled, and companies will

relocate to states with stronger higher education systems. Ohio will lose talent. Ohio will lose revenue. Other states will move forward while we fall behind.

Cuyahoga Community College is not just a place where students take classes. It is a lifeline for entire communities. We provide pathways to new careers, second chances for those looking to improve their lives, and opportunities for students from all backgrounds to find their place in higher education. At Tri-C, we serve working adults, veterans, first-generation college students, and historically underrepresented groups. We don't just teach subjects—we mentor, advise, and support students as they navigate a system that can often feel overwhelming. And yet, SB1 threatens this mission by undermining the very structure that allows faculty to do this work effectively

And SB1 goes even further. It threatens academic freedom, restricting what can be taught and creating an atmosphere of surveillance. Imagine a classroom where students hesitate to ask tough questions about public health, climate change, or economic policy for fear of political repercussions. Imagine faculty who must choose between **teaching truthfully** and **keeping their jobs**.

Ohio cannot afford this bill. We cannot afford to lose experienced educators, weaken our workforce pipeline, and destabilize our colleges. We cannot afford to turn our classrooms into spaces of fear rather than inquiry.

I urge you not to advance this Bill.