

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is David Adkins. I am an Ohio citizen and a graduate from two of our fantastic Ohio public universities in Cleveland State University & Kent State University. As someone who has benefited greatly from attending public universities in the state of Ohio, I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 1.

During my time as a student at Cleveland State University and Kent State University, I can say with the highest confidence that I never felt like any professor was trying to threaten or shut down a viewpoint or thought that I or my classmates wanted to discuss. Some of the conversations that I had in and out of the classrooms with other students & professors who had different backgrounds, religions and viewpoints that were not the same as mine were some of the most engaging conversations that I have had in my life and helped to sharpen my ability to be a critical thinker.

Isn't that what we all want for our own children and for all the students who may attend one of the great public universities located here in Ohio? If we limit the conversations in our classrooms, make it more difficult for students to ask questions, make it difficult for our professors to know what they can and cannot say, then how are we serving the students who attend Ohio public universities? How will students ever have the ability to process, analyze, and make their own decisions and come to their own conclusions if we omit parts of the conversations that might have different interpretations? The conversations we get to have as students may be one of the only times in our lives where we get to engage with others in the shared experience of the classroom, who are different than us and to explore new ideas in a respectful civil discourse. This bill does not serve the best interest of Ohio students because it legislates a climate of fear around discussing topics that some may deem 'controversial' but may be relevant and important toward learning.

Senate Bill 1 is redundant and will increase expenses for the State of Ohio and for Ohio public universities adding yet another layer of unnecessary duplicative policies to what is already in place. Providing students a mechanism to make a complaint so that their voices are heard, review of professors if a complaint is brought forward by a student, and student evaluations of the class and instructors at the end of every class are processes already in place. Why duplicate them?

I see that this bill is also calling for a new required course for undergraduates. Instead of what has been proposed on subjects that are likely covered through a variety of coursework readily available at the high school or college level, the course should be one that focuses on civil discourse. We need to prepare students to talk with each other respectfully, to listen and to discuss important ideas with an open mind, and to examine these ideas critically and share thoughts and feedback respectfully.

From my own experiences, you must first understand the problem you are trying to solve. Senate Bill 1 is too large and too broad, so I would ask the committee “What problem are you really trying to solve with Senate Bill 1?”. The language of this bill is ambiguous and uses hyperbole with words like “indoctrination” and “controversial” topics.

In closing, I believe this bill would make it more difficult for Ohio public universities to fulfill their mission of educating students and as a result make our Ohio public universities less competitive on the national landscape. This bill would make it more difficult for Ohio public universities to prepare students to develop as critical thinkers who can contribute and be leaders in our society and economy. Isn't that the problem that we should be solving together?

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to offer a written testimony