

February 9, 2025

TO: Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee Members
FROM: Richard Jordan, Miami Township, Clermont County
RE: In Opposition to Senate Bill 1, Enact Advance Ohio Education Act

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

I'm submitting a testimony concerning SB1, the Enact Advance Ohio Education Act. Thank you for accepting these written comments.

I want to record my opposition to SB1. At its core SB1 is an anti-labor, anti-collective bargaining law tucked into a word salad of references to the hot political topic of DEI, (diversity, equity, and inclusion). The extreme volume of verbiage the bill's authors have devoted to labeling DEI practices approaches the level of satire. Did the sponsors of SB1 hope to become caricatures of themselves for Saturday Night Live? I urge members of the committee to vote against advancing SB1 to the full senate. If enacted, believe SB1 enforcement will harm Ohio's colleges and universities in several ways. Consider the following likely outcomes.

This law would place a choke hold on faculty wage growth because it eliminates the right to strike and restricts collective bargaining over professional tenure. In Ohio, contract negotiations and disputes at colleges and universities rarely result in strikes. Why be concerned? If SB1's constraints are imposed upon our institutions, it's guaranteed the best and brightest teaching talent will seek employment outside the state. Ohioans may not see immediate impact, but as time passes the decline will become obvious to all.

The author of SB1 has devoted an excruciating amount of effort to eliminating DEI programs at colleges and universities. Implementing this law will achieve its obvious desired result, which is to lower minority representation on campuses. Unfortunately, the bill sponsors offer nothing to mitigate the inevitable backsliding that will occur. SB1 demands institutions achieve intellectual diversity among staff and student body. Doing so will not create opportunities for Ohio's historically neglected inner city and rural communities. Also, as seen in other recent legislation, Ohio lawmakers have exhibited great hostility toward LGBTQ+ individuals. This bill will further marginalize LGBTQ+ people and impede their ability to contribute to our economic growth. A more productive approach should be considered. This committee should propose legislation that will improve education funding for underserved communities. LGBTQ+ Ohioans deserve better protections too.

Concerning the provision in SB1 which prohibits institutions from endorsing or opposing "any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy", this wording is extremely vague. I believe the phrase and the specific examples cited as controversial are meant to intimidate college administrators and staff. Controversial topics rise and fall. Who will be the appointed arbiter of these issues? It seems possible that SB1 will make political influence the determining factor in management appointments and staff hiring. Is First Energy Corporation and political corruption off limits? Are colleges or universities allowed to oppose oil and gas drilling on campus? How about policies supporting student voting rights and political activity? The goal here seems to be the exclusion from curriculum some proven concepts and scientific theory that debunk the majority party's policy positions. My view, which many people agree with, is SB1 would make student participation in democracy and citizenship more difficult.

Legislators in this body should be focusing on adequately funding educational institutions in Ohio. Critical financial problems of schools and students are being ignored.

Senate Bill 1, the Enact Advance Ohio Education Act is a crass political maneuver designed to keep favor with Christian nationalists, fossil fuel producers and deep state conspiracy theorists. The ginned-up claims of liberal bias of college administrators can't be quantified. It's time to let go of them. SB1 needs to die in committee.

Thank you for considering my views.

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