

Testimony Opposing Ohio Senate Bill 1

Chairperson, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am the daughter of a coal miner and retired police officer from Monroe County, Ohio. I graduated from Ohio University in 2000 and strongly oppose SB 1 and its companion bill, HB6. I am the parent of a high school senior with a 4.49 GPA who has received merit and presidential scholarships from multiple universities, both in-state and out-of-state. His achievements reflect his academic excellence and dedication to countless community service hours.

Among his scholarship offers is one from an Ohio public university, awarded through a program designed to make higher education more accessible for high-achieving students from diverse backgrounds. This scholarship, which he earned by demonstrating academic excellence and a commitment to fostering diversity, is the maximum award through this initiative. However, under Senate Bill 1 (Section 3345.0217, pp. 22), programs like this may no longer exist or be forced to change in ways that could impact students who have already been awarded funding.

Consequently, students like my son—who have met every expectation of academic excellence—may jeopardize their financial aid simply because their scholarship acknowledges the importance of diversity and inclusion.

Beyond the impact on students, I am deeply concerned about the bill's approach to faculty and staff evaluation. Senate Bill 1 (Sections 3345.451-3345.453, pp. 32-35) allows student evaluations to play a decisive role in faculty and staff performance reviews, introducing significant risks. Students, particularly undergraduates, may lack the maturity or perspective to assess an educator's effectiveness fairly. A professor, for example, who upholds high academic standards or challenges students intellectually could be penalized with poor evaluations—not due to inadequate teaching but because of resistance to rigorous expectations. Additionally, student evaluations can be influenced by personal grievances or biases, potentially leading to unjust consequences for faculty members who do their jobs with integrity. Ohio's universities should prioritize academic excellence and not subject faculty to unstable and subjective review processes that could erode the quality of education.

Senate Bill 1 fundamentally weakens Ohio's public higher education system, limiting academic freedom, removing key institutional supports, and discouraging top students and faculty from choosing Ohio's universities. With another child in high school, my family will most likely apply solely to out-of-state institutions if this bill takes effect. If our state is committed to attracting and retaining exceptional scholars and educators, this legislation moves us in the wrong direction. I urge you to consider the long-term harm this bill will cause and vote against its passage. Ohio should invest in its students, not drive them—and their talents—elsewhere.

Respectfully, Elaine Su