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Dear Senate Committee Members:

I am writing this letter in opposition to S.B. 1. After reading the proposed legislation in its entirety, I feel compelled to write this letter – the first I have ever written of this kind. To be fair, I do support the push to create stronger programming around civics. However, as an educator and concerned citizen, I oppose this legislation because of its limitations around discussing important national issues like climate change and its vague language and anti-union sentiment. Furthermore, part of understanding civics is understanding advocacy and how to fairly address opposing viewpoints. These are vital critical thinking skills necessary to navigate our democracy and serve in the workforce, yet they are limited by this proposed legislation.

I have been a college educator for over 15 years. In that time, I've regularly addressed controversial topics, especially in my Composition II courses. At present, I teach one English course with a thematic approach that connects students with environmental justice and a Humanities course that focuses on sustainability in all its forms. When addressing these global concerns, my priority is not to "indoctrinate" students but to show them how to support their positions using reputable sources. With relationship to climate, it is not the science that is controversial. In addition to 97% of scientists supporting its existence, the most recent Gallup poll also notes that nearly two-thirds of Americans are concerned about it, with nearly 42% of our citizens worrying "a great deal". The controversy typically lies in how we handle climate change. In that respect, students are encouraged to think creatively and welcome to challenge current approaches like new car EV mandates. I relish the opportunity to read well-developed papers that differ and even oppose my viewpoints because it means I have done my job. Removing the ability to address controversial issues in higher education limits students' abilities to think critically and creatively about important issues; both of these skills are invaluable to our country's future.

Furthermore, S.B.1 would rob faculty of the ability to effectively advocate for themselves. In my 17 years in higher education, I have never felt moved to strike, but this right has been an essential component of advancing workers' rights in America for over a century. Depriving college educators of this option is antithetical to our democratic past and denies us the ability to demand fair and balanced negotiations when necessary.

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I hope these details will move you to vote “No” on S.B. 1. Thank you for your time and consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Casandra Coin-Sweeney