

Testimony of Margot Freer Prokop
House Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair

Feb. 11, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Margot Freer Prokop, PhD, and I am an Associate Professor of Biology at Cuyahoga Community College, where I have taught for 16 years. I do not represent Cuyahoga Community College but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I am very proud of the work I have done in the past 16 years at Cuyahoga community college (Tri-C). There are many things that I love about working at Tri-C. At Tri-C both faculty and students have a safe environment in which to learn and to grow. This safe learning environment is due to many factors. Faculty have job security, fair pay, and equitable work practices due to the strength of our AAUP-CCC union that has allowed us to have a collaborative relationship with the administration through collective bargaining. Students feel safe because they know that Tri-C is a welcome place for all students, regardless of their race, gender, beliefs, social class, or sexual orientation.

Senate bill 1 will disrupt this safe learning environment for both faculty and students. At the present time all members of the Tri-C community, faculty, administration, and students have the freedom to contribute to and shape the learning environment at Tri-C. SB1 impact faculty by limiting hiring practices and thereby reducing the diversity of our faculty. Having a faculty population with diverse backgrounds and knowledge allows our students to grow and become better citizens to our country, community, and to the planet. This bill will also violate the academic freedom of faculty by the unnecessary monitoring of our syllabi and dictating which topics we can teach. SB1 will impact students by seeking to eliminate vital DEI initiatives which allow all students to learn in a safe and equitable environment. The bill also promises to create an adversarial relationship between students and faculty by encouraging students to find flaws and report faculty.

Senate bill 1 sets a dangerous precedence that, if passed, could eventually lead to news bills targeting other unions and DEI initiatives in Ohio. These restrictions will be detrimental to many communities as they will result in unfair hiring practices, reductions in wages, unsafe working conditions, and lower living standards for workers in Ohio.

I ask you to please consider my testimony and vote no on Senate bill 1.

Margot Freer Prokop, PhD