

Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Aimee Trunko and I am a graduate student at a university in Ohio. I stand in opposition to Senate Bill 1 because it infringes on academic freedom and inhibits students from being prepared for the reality of the world. Make no mistake: this bill is not only an attack on higher education, but also on freedom, democracy, opportunity, and fairness that should define us as a state and nation.

As a student who also teaches as part of my graduate program, with the goal of a career in academia, I am in a unique position of being affected by this as a student, as an instructor, and as a future educator. This bill will silence classroom discussions on controversial topics with vague mandates that are up to interpretation. I have both participated in and led these discussions and they are both challenging intellectually as well as critical in order to receive a full education. This bill will alienate students from diverse backgrounds who are seeking an education to better themselves and their world.

I have lived in Ohio my entire life, not because I had to but because I chose to. I love my state. I love my university. I planned a future here. I cannot stand by and allow this to happen without speaking up. If Ohio continues to impose political oversight rather than allow universities and faculty to make their own decisions about curriculum and campus policies (faculty who have dedicated their entire careers to cultivating these), then I no longer see a future for myself here.

If this bill passes, Ohio will be far less attractive to students, graduates, and employers. In the short term, this bill places arbitrary restrictions on the hiring of faculty and both dilutes and distorts the definition of intellectual diversity; this hinders evidence-based teaching. It aims to

micromanage course syllabi, monitor faculty for ideological conformity, and eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion curriculums that make learning both accessible and equitable for all students, who are potential future employees of the state of Ohio. The success of Ohio's higher education system depends on intellectual freedom, not political mandates. This bill is threatening university funding based on ideological standards in an attempt to force institutions into political submission. Far from the short-term impact if this bill passes are long-term and far-reaching consequences that extend beyond universities and faculty. This is not how we ensure the future of the state I love and call home (at least for now). I urge this committee to vote no on Senate Bill 1. Voting yes is voting to destroy not only the state of higher education within Ohio, but also the future and integrity of the state itself. We will lose countless students, educators, and community members. Please protect the integrity of the state I call home.