

Senate Bill 1 Testimony Bobby McAlpine
Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1
Senate Committee on Workforce and Higher Education
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Bobby McAlpine, President of the Student Body
Undergraduate Student Government of The Ohio State University

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Bobby McAlpine and today I am speaking as a student. I am a student that was elected to be the President of THE Ohio State University student body. Today, I am here to convey to you some data we collected from our students about issues and sentiments that pertain to Senate Bill 1. Understanding the implications that this bill would potentially have on higher education for students across the state, we leaders within the student population wanted to get a better understanding of how Ohio State students actually feel about their ability to express their ideas, diversity, equity, and inclusion training, and sentiments surrounding the university's role in the free exchange of ideas. Senate Bill 83 if passed has the potential to greatly impact college student's education so we feel it is important that you have an understanding of what students think about the current state of higher education.

We were able to survey over 1500 students in this survey.

First, because of the implications that this bill might have for free speech we wanted to get a better understanding of students' ability to freely express their beliefs on campus. 78% of students said that they feel safe to express their political ideologies on campus regardless of political preference. I ask that you consider this fact when evaluating this bill that has the potential to greatly limit students ability to express their political beliefs in classroom settings which directly impacts their first amendment rights.

Along that line with the understanding that the vast majority of students are in fact comfortable expressing their political beliefs on campus, we also wanted to gather information on if students feel Ohio State tries to teach or guide them to think and believe specific political beliefs. Often there are sentiments that institutions of higher education seek to impose liberal beliefs on students and indoctrinate young people so we wanted to see if students felt that their education was biased. 81% of students do not believe the Ohio State faculty, staff, or administration seek to impose certain political beliefs upon them. The vast majority of students surveyed believe that Ohio State is an institution of higher learning that facilitates an environment where students are able to learn about topics free of bias, and the university facilitates extracurricular events for students and people of all beliefs, with the most cited example being the recent event held at Ohio State with popular conservative figures Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens in which hundreds of people were able to attend while safely and freely share their ideas at Ohio State.

Lastly, due to the serious implications that this bill has the potential to have on mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion training in higher education, we wanted to see how meaningful DEI training has been to students at Ohio State so we could gauge the positive or negative impact that the trainings have. It is also important to acknowledge that diversity, equity, and inclusion at Ohio State is incumbent of a variety of identities including those which pertain to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, socio-economic status, religion, and first-gen status. Also for a variety of our DEI programs at Ohio State like for example Morrill Scholars, diversity in thought is what is emphasized not necessarily diversity in actual individual identities.

Out of 1574 students surveyed, 1328 said that Ohio State's DEI education, efforts, and programs were meaningful in some way, whether it be somewhat meaningful, moderately meaningful, or extremely meaningful. While almost 86% of the total students surveyed said that DEI was meaningful in some way a resounding 46% of respondents said that DEI at Ohio State was extremely meaningful to their college experience. That says something. Almost half of the students that took this survey at the largest university in this state said that Ohio State's Diversity Equity and Inclusion was extremely meaningful.

Obviously, DEI programming has been incredibly beneficial and impactful to our students, and I ask that you consider the overwhelming positive impact that these programs have on Ohio State Students and college students as a whole when evaluating this bill which has the potentiality to drastically reduce and change that impactful DEI training that the vast majority of our student.

Overall, I hope that my testimony has given you some insight into how college students actually feel about some of the concerns that seek to be resolved by SB 83 and I hope that when considering this bill which if passed, will change the college experiences of hundreds of thousands of students across the state that you actually consider what students want and how they feel about their own education.

When I ran to represent the full student body at THE Ohio State University, I raised my right hand and took an oath. That oath said that I will defend the rights of student to the best of my ability. As you all have heard today, the vast majority of those students disagree with specific parts of this bill but also it shows that all students want to idea share freely. I do believe we have some work to do, but it is not in my view that Senate Bill 1 is the way to do it.

Also, in the future if there is ever a bill that seeks to drastically change higher education, I hope that this body can be more intentional with consulting students and bringing us into the conversation. Thank you so much for allowing me to speak. have a great day!