

Testimony of John Lundine
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 9, 2025

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

My name is John Lundine, and I am a proud graduate of the Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (MS 2005). I am writing to object to the radical SB1 that is currently being rammed through the Ohio Senate. This bill does nothing to improve the state of higher education in the great state of Ohio, but rather weakens our ability to educate the next generation of leaders, scholars, researchers, and professionals.

SB 1 stands in opposition to academic freedom AND teaching and supporting the growth of undergraduate and graduate students. If we want Ohio to continue to be a state that educates leaders of tomorrow, we must not place politically motivated restrictions on public higher education. Universities add significantly to the growth of Ohio and are strong examples of learning and achievement, thereby contributing to economic growth and well-being for all Ohioans.

Contrary to the rhetoric of those pushing this harmful bill, SB 1 RESTRICTS free speech and academic freedom. It minimizes critical thinking and will do nothing to enhance our future economy of thinkers and doers in Ohio. I urge Ohio legislatures to stand against this unpopular bill. Ohioans are not interested in this biased and politically motivated plan.

While not perfect, I support the following amendments that have been offered:

- Revise language on "intellectual diversity" to clarify that faculty fully maintain academic freedom and are not forced to teach ideas about which there is no consensus within their academic discipline.
- Modify the American civic literacy course section to allow instructors to have control of the curriculum, as is required for accreditation.
- Delete the broad definition of "retrenchment," which as written would grant administrators unlimited authority to shut down academic programs and layoff faculty at whim.
- To address concerns about unfunded mandates and administrative micro-managing, the proposed amendments would: Modify the faculty evaluation section to allow boards of trustees to maintain or modify current evaluation systems that are already in place.

- Remove the section on degree program elimination, which contains arbitrary metrics, and replace it with a proposal to study the issue.
- Eliminate language banning programs and services for underrepresented students.
- Allow universities to post general syllabi online for public information instead of overly detailed syllabi.
- To address concerns about workers' rights, the proposed amendments would: Eliminate language that prohibits faculty from negotiating over fundamental collective bargaining subjects and removes their right to strike over unfair treatment.
- Remove the section on post-tenure review that allows for tenured faculty to be terminated at any time without due process.

I submit this testimony in opposition to this harmful bill. I urge moderate and thoughtful action to move Ohio forward – not backward.

Respectfully submitted,

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