

Testimony of Everson Brooks
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair
February 10, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Higher Education Committee.

My name is Everson Brooks, and I am testifying as a private citizen, though I am currently involved in my university studies. I am also a queer person, surrounded by many others both like and unlike myself, here in school, and it is through both these perspectives as an individual and a group that I am in firm opposition to the SB 1 bill because of its obvious vocality against promoting the discussion of such “controversial topics” as the very identities of many Ohioan students. I am involved in many social studies and fine arts classes in school, which thrive around the ideas of personal experience and the uncomfortable history of discrimination in the United States and broader world, and I know that attempting to limit these discussions will bring my studies to a standstill. Additionally, I think this bill is completely contradictory of itself, attempting to push “intellectual diversity” while gutting DEI initiatives and promoting the censorship of student voices, who are now unable to learn about such crucial issues such as racism, foreign policy, and even climate. If American Civic Literacy becomes a required course for every school’s roster, how can we effectively learn why the Emancipation Proclamation, or the Letter From Birmingham Jail are so crucial in American history if we can’t learn about the proliferation of American racism? I believe this idea of allowing students to “reach their own conclusions” seeks to promote confusion and lack of awareness about current socio-political issues, and suggests that universities are attempting to indoctrinate their students when I have always known my institutions to allow their students to have their own opinions, just supported by the curriculum’s facts: this would no longer be possible if we cannot discuss these topics at all.

Yet another concern I have about this bill is that it bans full-time faculty from striking. This feels like yet another attempt in this bill to silence the voices of those affected by it, wanting to prevent protestation of its issues before they are even put into action. Generally I believe that this bill, through the guise of equality and kindness for all, seeks to quell opposition and variety, and to conceal the “controversial” beliefs of everyone outside of the bubble of its proponents, as if these subjects and opinions do not exist at all. I myself am of the belief that to never want to learn, and to feel change, or to seek new and diverse people, with thoughts like and unlike one’s own, however uncomfortable those conversations may be, is the most controversial and harmful stance that one may take.