

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

Thank you for reading my testimony today. My name is James Schmidt, and I am a computer science and physics teacher in the Shaker Heights City School District. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1 because it poses a serious threat to STEM education by imposing political interference on how science, technology, engineering, and math are taught in our schools.

This bill undermines evidence-based teaching by enforcing vague ideological restrictions that could limit discussions on critical scientific topics, from climate change to medical research. It threatens to micromanage curricula, restrict teacher autonomy, and impose hiring limitations that could deter qualified STEM educators from working in Ohio. Furthermore, by targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, SB1 weakens efforts to expand access to STEM fields, particularly for underrepresented students, reducing the talent pool that feeds into Ohio's workforce and innovation economy.

Although my field is not directly political, this bill will have significant consequences for the way scientific research and education are conducted. The attempt to police discussions of "controversial" topics, including climate change, public policy, and economics, is deeply concerning. Science thrives on rigorous debate, evidence-based conclusions, and the free exchange of ideas. If this bill forces universities to censor discussions around these issues, it will drive away top faculty, reduce funding opportunities, and limit the ability of students like mine to receive the best possible education. If Ohio wants to remain competitive in research and innovation, we must resist government overreach into academia.

STEM education thrives on academic freedom, critical inquiry, and the ability to teach students how to evaluate evidence and solve complex problems. If passed, this bill will hinder our ability to prepare students for the demands of modern science and technology careers, putting Ohio at a disadvantage in an increasingly competitive global landscape. I urge you to oppose SB1 for the sake of our students, our schools, and Ohio's future in STEM.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

James Schmidt