

Testimony of Esra Gules-Guctas, Ph.D.  
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee  
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair  
February 10, 2025

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

My name is Esra Gules-Guctas, and I am a professor of Artificial Intelligence, Data and Public Governance at the Ohio State University. I do not represent the Ohio State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to SB1. This bill sets a troubling precedent for legislative overreach into academic affairs. While civic education is vital, this bill undermines academic freedom, faculty expertise, and institutional autonomy by imposing rigid curricular requirements. Civic literacy is too important to be reduced to a checklist. Micromanaging curriculum content crosses a line into institutional governance. Such intrusion risks politicizing education, as future lawmakers could mandate ideologically driven content in any discipline, eroding public trust in universities as nonpartisan spaces for inquiry.

SB1 claims to support “intellectual diversity,” yet its mandate achieves the opposite. Academic freedom *requires* that educators—not politicians—decide how to teach their subjects. If enacted, this provision would signal that the state values compliance over innovation, uniformity over diversity of thought.

I urge the legislature to respect the expertise of Ohio’s faculty and the autonomy of its universities. University faculty are highly trained professionals with advanced credentials in their fields. They possess the specialized knowledge necessary to design curricula and pedagogical best practices. Preserving academic freedom is not only a matter of principle but a necessity for maintaining the excellence and integrity of Ohio’s higher education system.