

**Opponent Testimony for SB1
"Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act"
Senate Higher Education Committee**

February 12, 2025

**Mary Triece,
Professor**

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

My name is Mary Triece. I am a professor in the School of Communication at The University of Akron where I have taught for over 26 years. I do not represent The University of Akron but rather am writing as a private citizen in **opposition to Senate Bill 1**.

I have read Senate Bill 1 in its entirety. There are many reasons why this bill will have a negative impact on the quality of education at Ohio's colleges and universities. In my testimony today, I am going to focus on two of these negative outcomes.

First, SB 1 uses vague and confusing language that will lead to a weakening of curricula that teach critical thinking and reasoning skills. Consider that each one of you here exercises critical thinking and reasoning skills every day in your roles as leaders. Likewise, all Ohio residents benefit from the exercise of critical thinking and reasoning skills as we work together to help our businesses and communities thrive. These skills are learned in the college classroom.

Specifically, section 3345.0217 of the bill defines controversial belief or policy and states institution must: "Affirm and declare that faculty and staff shall allow and encourage students to reach their own conclusions about all controversial beliefs or policies and shall not seek to indoctrinate any social, political, or religious point of view" (lines 672-675).

To state that faculty "indoctrinate" students is unfounded, that is, lacks evidence, and also begs the question of what is meant by "indoctrination." To avoid "indoctrination" must faculty treat all ideas as equally well-reasoned and valid? I have in mind the growing embrace of hate group ideologies such as those of the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, both of which have been designated as a hate group by the Southern Policy Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/proud-boys/>; <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/oath-keepers/>). If a student argues in

favor of the superiority of white Christian men and uses the reasoning of the Proud Boys as evidence, must the instructor allow that view in the name of “intellectual diversity?” If an instructor points out to the student the poorly reasoned, unethical, and unfounded arguments used by members of the Proud Boys who espouse race, sex, and religious hierarchies (that is, white male Christian superiority), is that “indoctrination?”

I hope you see what I am getting at--- SB 1 leaves faculty vulnerable to charges of “indoctrination” for establishing guardrails for what counts as a credible claim/argument/assertion. Additionally, the mandate to “demonstrate intellectual diversity” is vague and impractical and can lead down a slippery slope of moral relativism and political paralysis if educators fear they will be accused of “indoctrination.”

Second, Section 3345.445, which denies faculty the right to collectively bargain. Higher education administrators know that the most effective way to ensure the well-being and effectiveness of our institutions is through shared governance. It is faculty—not administrators, not elected leaders—that teach and interact with tuition-paying students every day. As such, educators have a window into what makes for effective student-centered policies, standards, and systems. Thus, the right of instructors to collectively bargain over policies and standards is paramount for the well-being of students.

I am imploring you as our elected leaders: Please do not allow SB 1 to move forward, please vote **no on Senate Bill 1**.