

Testimony of Pedro Schacht Pereira, PhD
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 Pedro Pereira, and I am a professor of Portuguese at the Ohio State University, where I have taught for seventeen years. I do not represent OSU but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

This bill purports to promote intellectual diversity but will in fact discourage it. It will fundamentally compromise the ability of universities in Ohio to advance their scientific and pedagogical missions, because it contains provisions that politicize the classroom, ensure political control over what is taught, and erode tenure and academic freedom. The bill's many provisions promote vigilantism, redundant and cumbersome faculty evaluations, and ideological monitorization of syllabi that would supersede the scientific scrutiny already in place. In these ways, the bill would facilitate the spread of state-mandated ideology, rather than allow for the blossoming of free inquiry through informed judgment. In fact, we know that informed judgement is not a priority for this legislation: its promoters seem to believe that students aged 18 to 22 are being subjected to individual faculty indoctrination, a sign that they have not visited many college classrooms. Senators, allow me to inform you: while the state definitely has the power to chill discourse and free inquiry, young men and women are in general very suspicious and dismissive of the imposition of ideas.

As a parent of an OSU student, I am shocked that the promoters of this bill have showcased Holocaust denial as worthy of a seat at the table, and I urge them to explain to Ohioans, particularly those whose ancestors died on the shores of Normandy, exactly what other side to the Holocaust their young constituents should be exposed to, and on which side they are on. I, for one, want my son to have the chance to learn how to craft a persuasive argument, and not be forced to respect ideas that have been historically defeated and considered abhorrent for all countries that are signatories of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As a faculty member, I resent that instead of listening to the many Ohioans that have testified against the similarly destructive bills rejected in the previous General Assembly, the promoters of this legislation choose to cast suspicion on an entire profession. They should seek instead to understand the mechanisms already in place at universities to monitor and address wrongdoing by faculty students, staff, and administrators. If passed, this bill will make Ohio an unattractive state for all those interested in pursuing rewarding careers in research and teaching, as well as for students seeking a rigorous training in their fields and vocations. It took a great effort by many generations of Ohio taxpayers, faculty, and students to turn Ohio universities into the excellent institutions they are today.

Because their priorities seem to be to advance a cultural war rather than to guarantee a high-quality system of higher education, I don't think the sponsors of this bill mind the destruction it will no doubt sow. But I hope those voting on it will care enough about their state and their constituents to reject this nefarious bill. I invite you to instead work closely with those who know universities from within. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.