

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1
Senate Higher Education Committee
February 10th, 2025

Jeremy Lohr

Chair Kristina D. Roegner, Vice Chair Jerry C. Cirino, Ranking Member Catherine D. Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Jeremy Lohr. I am a first-year student at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. I oppose the possible sanctioning of professors simply because a course contains “political, racial, gender, [or] religious bias.” Professors would be left to consider whether the very nature of a course would violate the law.

Any history, political science, or economics course is almost certain to approach the topic from a limited perspective. In a 15-week semester, a professor cannot possibly cover every viewpoint on every topic to eliminate all bias. It is illogical to impose such an onerous restriction that is unprecedented in the world of higher education. For example, introductory economics courses generally focus on the principles of free-market capitalism. Would the professor, who can barely fit these core principles into one semester of study, be sanctioned for failing to discuss the merits of Karl Marx’s beliefs or Fidel Castro’s socialist policies? I doubt the Ohio Senate wants to prohibit professors from critiquing these controversial economic systems.

The Ohio Senate is attempting to prevent students from being forced to recognize various “controversial beliefs” to be successful in a class. There are simpler ways to achieve this goal. Namely, professors could be required to grade all essays and exams without knowing whose essay or exam they are grading. Additionally, if an argumentative essay prompt examines a controversial issue, the professor could be required to randomly select the students who must advocate for and against the issue. This shifts the focus of the assignment to the student’s argumentative and writing skills instead of their political views.

Professors should have the right to express their own opinions on an issue, assuming students who disagree are not penalized. Some of the most engaging class discussions occur when a professor and student disagree. A system of randomized grading and randomized essay topic assignment would ensure that students who vocalize their opinions on controversial issues are not punished by a professor through the student’s grade. The goal of the legislature should be to promote free speech on college campuses, but Senate Bill 1 limits class discussion by censoring professors and minimizing the range of content that can be covered in courses.

I respectfully ask the Ohio Senate to vote “No” on this bill. Thank you.