

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Aryel Clarke. I am a chemistry professor who has recently moved back to Ohio to teach back home in the community I was raised in. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

Throughout my life I have been passionate about the transformative power of higher education. I was a first-generation college student who got my start in the Lorain County Early College High School program at Lorain County Community College. My experience there helped me to grow as a person and allowed me to pursue bachelor's and doctoral degrees. I am proud of my community college roots and I am honored to return to serve the community that empowered me.

If it were not for the free debate of so-called controversial topics in nearly all of my courses, from policy debate in political science courses to environmental concerns in science courses, I would not have been able to grow into the person I am today. SB 1 will stifle our ability as educators to encourage students to be the skeptical, critical thinkers they must be to be successful and competitive in their careers. Exposure to multiple viewpoints and experiencing the friction of contentious civil debate within a classroom is a fundamental educational experience that models how to respectfully engage with others outside of the classroom. We cannot rob our students of these experiences because it will lower the quality of the education they (and Ohio taxpayers) are paying for and will not adequately prepare them to be strong members of the workforce.

My husband and I chose to move back to Ohio after being away for several years because we love our home state and the people that live here. However, the passage of SB 1 would force us to reconsider our commitment to staying in Ohio. Beyond the censorship of freedom of speech in classrooms discussed above, SB 1 would damage basic job protections that are standard in higher education. Should SB 1 pass, I expect that many of my colleagues will also re-evaluate whether they are willing or able to continue teaching at Ohio institutions. Our state cannot afford the loss of talent at our colleges and universities. Our students deserve high-quality instructors and a high-quality education. SB 1 severely harms our ability to deliver this.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill that would jeopardize the educational opportunities for Ohioans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aryel Clarke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aryel" and last name "Clarke" clearly distinguishable.