

Testimony of Katie Clonan-Roy, Ph.D.
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 6, 2025

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

My name is Dr. Katie Clonan-Roy, and I am an Associate Professor of Education at Cleveland State University (CSU), where I have taught for 7 years. I do not represent CSU but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

As a professor of Education, I partner with schools and communities to conduct research on teaching and learning. At the undergraduate and master's level, I train K-12 teachers to teach or to improve their practice. At the doctoral level, I train educational leaders on educational theory and research methodologies.

I oppose this bill, and the ripple effects it will have on higher and K-12 education, for many reasons. One of the most important reasons is that **the policies and practices proposed in the bill do not align with recommendations for best practices in higher and K-12 education**, as outlined by the [American Educational Research Association](#) (AERA) and the [Association for the Study of Higher Education](#) (ASHE).

While I understand that SB 1 focuses on higher education, as someone who trains future teachers, I foresee the trickle-down impacts on K-12 schools and students. I am gravely concerned that SB 1 will weaken teacher preparation in Ohio and negatively impact K-12 student achievement.

For example, SB 1 stipulates that public institutions of higher education not require diversity, equity, and inclusion courses or training for students, staff, or faculty. **This is actually in direct opposition to what AERA, ASHE, the [Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession](#) (particularly standard 1), and leading researchers that make up these professional organizations, recommend.** Further, SB 1 demands that institutions of higher education “educate students by means of free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry to seek the truth.” Limiting required courses and training on diversity, equity, and inclusion, actually limits students’ ability to engage in free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry. Further, courses and trainings on diversity, equity, and inclusion are based on peer-reviewed social science (rather than uninformed opinions), which supports students’ ability to engage in rigorous intellectual inquiry.

In my field, limiting future teachers’ abilities to engage in rigorous intellectual inquiry, inclusive of topics related to diversity and equity, will impact their ability to serve and differentiate for their K-12 students. SB 1 would limit their ability to understand disability and how to create purposeful, equitable classroom accommodations for all students. SB 1 would limit their ability to analyze how poverty impacts early childhood development and equitably support students and families struggling with economic marginalization. It would limit their ability to problem solve around issues of race, economics, and mental health and address [Ohio’s worsening school-to-prison pipeline](#). SB 1 would have devastating educational, social, and economic impacts on our state.

Relatedly, **this bill stands to jeopardize free speech on campus**, a value that is important to university students, faculty, and staff, across the political spectrum. These factors make higher education in Ohio unattractive to current and prospective students (and thus worsen our “brain drain” problem), who are often attracted to free speech, rigorous intellectual inquiry, and the ability to engage in dialogue about how to make our state and our society more equitable for all. I have no doubt that such limitations on free speech and the ability to learn from cutting-edge research in Education would drive potential future teachers to look out of state for better educational options. Again, this would hurt Ohio universities and K-12 schools and students.

Further, SB 1 prohibits policies designed to segregate faculty, staff or students based on race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression in credit-earning classroom settings, orientation ceremonies, or graduation ceremonies. Again, this stipulation stands in direct opposition to what research (endorsed by AERA, ASHE, and other research-focused educational organizations) recommends as best practice. **We know that affinity groups and space for historically marginalized populations are best practice in higher education.** Relatedly, Cleveland State University was ranked as the [#1 University in Ohio for promoting social mobility](#) by *U.S. News & World Report*. The work that CSU does to support students who experience racial/ ethnic, socio-economic, religious, and/ or gender- and sexuality-based oppression, such as providing affinity groups and specialized population-specific programs, is critical to promoting social mobility for individuals and families and lifting up our region, economically and socially. SB 1 would not only hurt our students, but it would also hurt our region and our state.

What happens in schools (both K-12 and higher education) is too critically important for individual lives and community trajectories for it to be determined by political opinions. Rather, policies and practices implemented in higher education must follow what the science says: what overwhelming evidence and data points to as best practices. None of the proposals in SB 1 align with what educational research asserts is best practice. If the Ohio legislature wants to make positive change in higher education, they should consult educational experts and professional associations like AERA and ASHE, so that changes are backed by science (rather than by uninformed political opinion). In my informed opinion, SB 1 is a very damaging piece of legislation for educational institutions in Ohio, which are already struggling.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and dangerous bill. Please contact me if you would like any references to the research I cited above - I am happy to provide them to you. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Katie Clonan-Roy

kateroy@gmail.com