

Testimony of Allie Mickle, MA
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 Allie Mickle, and I am a PhD Candidate in History of Art at the Ohio State University (OSU), where I have been enrolled for 6 years and have been a Graduate Teaching Associate for 5 years. I do not represent OSU, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

At heart, this is a highly partisan Bill that seeks to target 'DEI' without clear recourse or understanding of what DEI initiatives actually do. The ban of DEI, the unclear language around 'controversial beliefs or policies,' and the introduction of faculty evaluations introduces a dangerous level of censorship and government oversight into the classroom and research output. This would create a harmful precedent for partisan censorship in higher education as well as present a massive overstep of government regulation and micromanagement, especially when threatening the removal of funds.

Beyond targeting DEI initiatives, this Bill introduces policies that would create one of the most restrictive tenure policies in the nation. This would make it extremely difficult for universities and colleges in Ohio to attract and retain high-caliber faculty, which would impact the recruitment of strong graduate students, who help make the university functional as graduate TAs; the rigour of academic research, which impacts the money brought into the state through grants; and the development of impactful curricula, which would harm the post-graduate success of students.

The current form of SB 1 is far too broad in its coverage to be considered legislation introduced in good faith. Under the attention-grabbing language of a 'DEI ban', it becomes difficult for citizens and constituents to focus on the minutiae of the many other elements introduced. The Bill contains at least 25 different issue areas which would create an unprecedented number of unworkable mandates and policies, most of which are simply more burdensome versions of what our colleges and universities already do. Giving administrators, faculty, and the chancellor more unfunded busywork takes away from student learning, research development, and adds to bureaucratic costs. None of this advances higher education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.