

Testimony of Christine Hurtubise

Before the Senate Higher Education Committee

Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair

February 10, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Christine Hurtubise, and I am testifying as a private citizen. I am a resident of Akron, Ohio and the mother of 2 children whom I am raising with my husband. One of my children is currently a sophomore at the University of Cincinnati and my second is a freshman in high school. Additionally, I am a speech-language pathologist at a children's hospital and have also recently taught for 2 semesters as a part-time professor at the University of Akron. I am also the product of a 12 year Roman Catholic school and public university education. I submit this testimony to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1.

Each day since high school I have prayed that I would put forward the best person I could be in the day ahead. I have learned through my education and professional growth that this is only possible by when I am able to critically review and assess my past actions and behaviors. Education that is thorough and includes looking at sensitive issues that reflect poor decisions made as our country developed will support students understanding and ability to do better in the future. It is that type of education which I received that has allowed me to be a critically thinking and open minded individual so I can support my children and family and provide best services to my patients and their families. The restrictions set forth in SB 1 regarding teaching of any "controversial belief or policy" meaning anything that is the "subject of political policy" are in direct conflict with an education that supports critical thinking, broadening of minds, and a thorough and conscientious review of issues that impact every citizen in this country. More specifically it will not facilitate these skills in my own children.

If SB 1 is passed my husband and I will no longer be able to trust that our children will get the education they deserve and less comprehensive in comparison to peers that are being educated outside of the state of Ohio. This fact will mean that we will assist my current university student in moving to an out of state school, and that my younger student will also attend school out of state. SB 1 will absolutely negatively impact the college and university education of all of our children and thus their ability to be competitive in the job market in the future.

Accessibility to education is also a priority for me as it impacts the individuals I work with in my profession. Specifically, the funds via scholarships and grants as well as the support services that are provided to university students with disabilities is required for them to be able to receive an equitable education. DEI and services related to this allow for my patients to access higher education and any cuts to these programs would prevent them from doing so. These individuals deserve education and this supports them to be fully participating and contributing members of society socially and financially.

Furthermore, the additional requirement for university students to complete a course in American government or history with a wide range of required readings designated by the state and pass a yet unknown cumulative exam is excessive. Especially considering that university requirements currently include core knowledge courses, coursework within the selected major, as well as experiential opportunities stretches both the workload expected as well as the wallets of those individuals paying for every credit taken.

Finally, as someone that was raised Roman Catholic, I would like to address concerns regarding the safety of someone expressing beliefs that are in conflict with “controversial beliefs or policy.” As I indicated earlier I attended a public university for my bachelor’s and master’s degrees. There were several moments where I expressed an opinion that was not inline with what was being taught. I never felt unsafe, nor did I feel pressured into believing otherwise. I actually was drawn into open discussion which made me critically assess my beliefs and come to my own decisions.

A comprehensive and thorough education that provides a clear and accurate depiction of history that covers our successes as well as the painful aspects of the evolution of our country and humanity at large is the best way to support critical thinking and empathy in our children. This will help them improve and build the best future for our country. Passage of SB 1 would be misguided and will directly impede our children’s education and our ability to achieve a better future as it will allow perpetuation of harmful misinformation.

I therefore implore you to vote no on this bill that will prevent our children from learning to be empathetic and critical thinkers. It will also cause employers from around the world to pass over our graduates due to a less comprehensive education. SB 1 would also interfere with the appropriate support of education of individuals with disabilities. Vote no on Senate Bill 1!

Thank you for your time.
Christine Hurtubise