

Testimony of Marijke Hecht, MS, PhD
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 Marijke Hecht, and I am a professor of environmental education in the School of Environment and Natural Resources in the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University where I have taught for the last 3 years. I do not represent The Ohio State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

My primary concern with SB1 is the potential serious negative impacts of teaching students about climate policies as a “controversial belief”. A recent study in the journal Nature states that, “There is near-universal consensus (97–99.9%) in the peer-reviewed scientific literature that the climate is changing as a result of human activity.” (see “A 27-country test of communicating the scientific consensus on climate change” in Nature by Večkalov,, et al., 2024, p. 1892). We are all less safe when we do not teach the reality of climate change to the students that will be filling critical jobs in Ohio when they graduate. Denying that climate change is happening would hurt farmers, one of the backbone communities of the state of Ohio, by not addressing the causes of climate change-induced drought and other extreme weather events. It would hurt tourism and the fishing industry in Lake Erie by not acknowledging potential climate related impacts to water quality from algal blooms. It would hurt first responders by denying them factual information about the causes of flooding and other impacts of climate change on our communities.

Teaching Ohio’s students that climate change is a controversial topic, or that climate change denial should be taken seriously in discussion of climate policies, would put our students at a serious disadvantage as they enter the workforce and begin to interact with other local, national, and international leaders who have received the most up-to-date and accurate scientific and policy education. The Ohio State University is one of the most respected land grant institutions in our country. We owe all OSU students, and all students at institutions of higher education across Ohio, the highest quality education so that they are prepared to succeed and become leaders of our communities in the coming years. SB1 is at odds with the values of higher education and should be voted down.