

Testimony of Nicholas A. Booker
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
11 Feb 2025

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

My name is Nicholas Booker, and I am a graduate student at The Ohio State University, where I have studied for four years. I do not represent The Ohio State University or any student organizations; rather, I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

As a student and a citizen of Ohio, born and raised in the United States, I ask you to vote no on Senate Bill 1. SB 1 is a disgraceful attempt by a small group of politicians to limit what Ohio's students are allowed to learn. I implore you to reject SB 1 and instead have meaningful conversations with students at Ohio's universities about what we need today. The bill would destroy many of the freedoms that I, as a student, rely on to gain the skills I need to get a job and contribute to my community and the Ohio economy as a worker and citizen.

Founders of the United States like Thomas Jefferson would be ashamed of Senate Bill 1. In his 1779 "A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," Jefferson warned that even in the best forms of government, "those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny." To work against that turn toward tyranny, Jefferson wrote that we need to "illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people." He wrote that we should learn subjects like history, reading, and writing. Senate Bill 1 would have disastrous effects on my ability to study those subjects that Thomas Jefferson fought so hard for.

SB 1 would allow a small group of politicians to silence students they disagree with, limit our freedoms, and censor our conversations in Ohio's places of learning. I take pride in being a Buckeye, but Senate Bill 1 would make our university less competitive nationally and internationally, and it would inevitably mean that Ohio students become less employable, less educated, and less free.

The bill says that on the board of trustees of The Ohio State University, *my* university, "Student members shall have no voting power on the board." Please don't take away the rights of students to make decisions for ourselves. I have always had valuable conversations as a student at my university about difficult issues, but this bill would take power away from students to decide for ourselves what "controversial beliefs" we can and can't study. This would lead Ohio toward the tyranny Thomas Jefferson warned us about in 1779, and I am asking you today to reject that turn toward tyranny by rejecting Senate Bill 1. Thank you.