

## **Testimony Against Ohio Higher Education Bill**

Dear Committee Members,

I stand before you today as a community college professor deeply concerned about the proposed legislation that threatens the foundational principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

**This bill represents an unprecedented intrusion** into higher education that will fundamentally undermine our ability to educate students effectively. Let me highlight several critical areas of concern...

### **Syllabus and Academic Constraints**

The mandated syllabus requirements are not mere administrative updates—they represent a significant erosion of academic professional discretion. By prescribing exact syllabus contents and mandating public posting with specific technical requirements, the bill transforms a pedagogical tool into a bureaucratic checklist. Also, providing syllabi to the public can absolutely endanger an instructor!

### **Intellectual Diversity Provisions**

While "intellectual diversity" sounds noble, the bill's definition and enforcement mechanisms are deeply problematic. The vague language around "controversial beliefs" creates a chilling effect where faculty will self-censor rather than risk complaints. The requirement to "allow students to reach their own conclusions" fundamentally misunderstands the nuanced role of education in critical thinking.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Restrictions**

The comprehensive ban on DEI initiatives is particularly harmful. These programs are not political statements but essential mechanisms for creating inclusive learning environments. By eliminating DEI efforts, we actively disadvantage students from marginalized communities.

### **Evaluation and Workload Policies**

The proposed faculty evaluation systems introduce punitive measures that prioritize administrative control over academic excellence. The post-tenure review process, with its rigid performance metrics, threatens academic freedom and will discourage innovative, long-term scholarly work.

### **Broader Implications**

This legislation transforms higher education from a space of intellectual exploration into a politically controlled environment. It represents a dangerous precedent of legislative micromanagement of academic institutions.

Our students deserve educators who can teach without fear of reprisal, who can explore complex ideas without constraint, and who can support all students equitably. This bill undermines those fundamental educational values.

## **The Devastating Impact on Climate Science Education**

### **Climate change should not be a political topic, full stop.**

The bill's provisions on "controversial beliefs," particularly those relating to climate policies, pose an existential threat to scientific education. By categorizing climate change as a "political controversy," the legislation undermines decades of rigorous scientific research and potentially silences crucial environmental science curriculum.

In earth science studies, climate change is not a political debate—it's a critical scientific reality supported by overwhelming empirical evidence. The proposed legislation would:

- Discourage comprehensive climate science instruction
- Create an environment where faculty fear presenting established scientific consensus
- Potentially prevent students from understanding one of the most significant environmental challenges of our time

We all live within the climate. All of us. Understanding climate AND its changing nature, affords us the ability to prepare for things like sea level rise, saltwater intrusion into aquifers, erosion and mass wasting. You would be doing a complete disservice to all students by placing this into a "controversial belief". Climate change is not a belief system.

**I urge you to reject this legislation and preserve the integrity of higher education in our state.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Davis", with a small asterisk above the end of the signature.

Professor Michelle Davis

Cuyahoga Community College

Michelle.davis@tri-c.edu

2/10/2025