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**House Higher Education Committee
Senate Bill 40: Written Opponent Testimony
Scott DiMauro – President, Ohio Education Association
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Good morning, Chair Keller and members of the House Higher Education Committee. My name is Scott DiMauro. I am in my 29th year in education, which includes 16 years in the classroom as a high school social studies teacher. I currently serve as President of the Ohio Education Association (OEA). On behalf of approximately 1,400 higher education members, thank you for this opportunity to provide written opponent testimony on Senate Bill 40, the “Forming Open and Robust University Minds Act.”

Senate Bill 40 is looking to solve a problem that does not exist. Ohio’s public colleges and universities recognize the 1st Amendment, the exercise of Freedom of Expression and Speech, as a central tenant of higher education. From the 1970s and onward, our colleges and universities have adopted policies and procedures to protect this critical right. Recently, many of our institutions have reaffirmed earlier commitments by signing onto the University of Chicago’s Statement on Freedom of Expression, also known as, the Chicago Principles. These Principles hold up the 1st Amendment as a means for institutions of higher education to create an academic environment of open discourse and rigorous inquiry.

Additionally, OEA is concerned about the increased costs that universities would incur as a result of the bill’s passage. Senate Bill 40 would deem that all outdoor spaces on campuses are public forums for expression, potentially resulting in safety concerns. The bill provides no state funding to protect students and staff, such as the need for increased campus security, that would be needed to enforce the provisions of the bill.

In summary, this legislation is unnecessary and OEA urges opposition to the bill. Ohio’s colleges and universities have and will continue to be places where differing viewpoints on topics are encouraged and not muted. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please contact me with any questions.

