

Thank you committee members for the opportunity to speak,

My name is Gerritzen Meyer and I am a 2019 graduate of the University of Cincinnati. On behalf of thousands of YAL student activists, I urge you to support SB 40.

Whether it be the case of Megan Phelps leaving the WBC or any of the over 200 members of the KKK that Daryl Davis has convinced to leave, an indisputable truth is that sunshine is always the best disinfectant for bad ideas.

Whether they are hateful ideologies, like racism and other bigotries, or downright genocidal ideas like fascism, socialism, or equality of outcome, the best way to combat these bad ideas is by allowing them into the public discourse to be deconstructed, examined, and their obvious flaws laid bare for all of society. I am here before you today because the foundation of our republic is under threat — astoundingly, from college and university campuses that previously were bastions for the very thing to which they are now hostile.

I held a skeptical view of the severity of the issue when I arrived at UC. But after becoming president of the UC chapter of Young Americans for Liberty, the reality of the treatment toward differing viewpoints was thrust upon me. One of our YAL members suggested hosting a tabling event to collect signatures from students supporting campus carry in conjunction with our free speech event passing out Constitutions, our group was approached by numerous professors demanding my members tell them their names and majors. I instructed them to not divulge this information fearing they may face reprisal. I gave my own name and major to them and the next day had multiple professors speak to me to criticize the event and my participation. I found it extremely troubling that professors who enjoy such broad freedom of speech under their tenure would seek to act so punitively towards students, denying the same right to us they so cherish.

Later, a UC administrator described our YAL group as “campus watchdogs of the 1st and 2nd amendment” and deriding this as a terrible thing for the university. Think about that...deriding the protection and celebration of the very first two rights enshrined in our Constitution.

Every single student attending a university has demonstrated the intellectual and academic abilities to gain their admission. In the same breath of recognizing and applauding their acumen, universities then deem students too credulous to confront ideas on their merits and dispute them.

These students will be tasked with this state’s and nation’s challenges, just as you all are now, but they’ll be hard-pressed to overcome those obstacles if they have been sheltered from some

of those very issues they will need to confront. They are adults and our nation is quite willing to send men and women their age into combat overseas — facing the harshest adversity in existence.

It is past time for Ohio's college students be able to exercise their freedoms — and responsibilities and accountability that accompany them. It comes with adulthood in the United States. And it is time for Ohio universities to stop hiding behind the phrase “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will always kill me.”