

Testimony of Nicholas Fagan,
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair

May 15, 2023

Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the House Higher Education Committee: My name is Nicholas Fagan, and I am a librarian at Kent State University. I do not represent Kent State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to House Bill 151.

I am opposed to this bill for several reasons. First, this bill would inhibit university speech by not letting them address important social and scientific issues. This bill prohibits a university from endorsing any climate policies or a sustainable future. I work with design students that will determine our future built environment. To foster a more energy efficient world for the next generation, the university must be able to make a stand on these issues. They must be able to see the support of these measures at an institutional level.

This bill also impacts academic freedom by requiring detailed syllabi to be placed on an accessible website. This measure will place a target on the back of professors teaching issues that outsiders deem unworthy of study. This could affect people of all political persuasions. With increasingly aggressive tactics to ban books and threaten organizations supporting certain issues, the safety of faculty is at risk.

Finally, this hurts workers' rights by limiting collective bargaining. This will impact middle-class workers, like myself, who are just trying to support their families. The bill resembles the former SB5, which eliminated collective bargaining rights for public employees and was overturned by voters by 62%. This is not something Ohio voters would support.

This bill will affect universities' ability to attract and retain top talent -- both in terms of faculty and students. Faculty will choose to go to places without governmental intrusion. Grants, research, and prestige will leave Ohio. The standing of universities will be hit nationally and globally. National rankings may fall and students will likely leave to find universities that support freedom of expression.

If you want higher education reform, reach out to all the students, faculty, administrators. Come to the campus and hold public forums. Learn from them what works and what does not. However, basing a bill off of a few anecdotes and random stories is not how to go about meaningful changes for anyone involved.