

# Ohio Senate passes bill targeting liberal ‘indoctrination’ on college campuses

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COLUMBUS, Ohio - The Ohio Senate passed a sweeping higher education bill Wednesday afternoon that would ban diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, faculty strikes, and require professors to post syllabi online, among dozens of other requirements.

[Senate Bill 1](#) passed 21 to 11 mostly along party lines. All nine Democrats in the Senate opposed the bill, plus Republican Sens. Tom Patton of Strongsville and Bill Blessing of Cincinnati.

It now heads to the Ohio House for consideration.

SB 1 is aimed at what Republicans have described as liberal “indoctrination” on college campuses. It applies to the state’s 14 public universities and 23 public community colleges.

The bill progressed through the Ohio Senate at breakneck speed, despite nearly 800 pieces of testimony - virtually all in opposition - submitted to lawmakers. In addition to the testimony, the bill drew multiple demonstrations against the reforms to the Statehouse over the last few weeks.

State Sen. Jerry Cirino, a Kirtland Republican, [introduced the bill](#) Jan. 22. Cirino sponsored a similar bill in the last two-year legislative session, but it never got to the House floor for a vote.

The bill’s chances of landing on Gov. Mike DeWine’s desk are higher now though, as the new speaker of the Ohio House, Lima Republican Rep. Matt Huffman, supported the bill last year, when he was Senate president.

Cirino said on the Senate floor that SB 1 will allow more speech on campuses, since students of all political stripes will feel free to express their opinions.

“Ohio will lead the nation in higher education reform,” he said.

Students and faculty unions fervidly oppose the bill, with protests at every hearing and even at the news conference in which Cirino announced the legislation was returning.

On the Senate floor, Democrats cautioned that campuses will become places where professors must take seriously people who deny the Holocaust, American slavery and the U.S. sending Japanese Americans to internment camps.

State Sen. Casey Weinstein, a Hudson Democrat, tried to amend the bill in both committee and on the Senate floor but the Republican majority in the Senate defeated all Democratic amendments

“When we legislators gain the authority to control the dialogue of what is taught in our universities, the quality of education suffers,” he said. “...Ohio students want lower tuition and better job opportunities, not big government mandates on classroom discussions.”

Among the provisions in the bill:

- Faculty would be prohibited from striking.

- Schools would have to create policies to cut programs and services and faculty to account for a decrease in student enrollment, overall funding or changing school missions.

- Schools must eliminate undergraduate programs if they confer on average fewer than five degrees a year over any three-year period.

- Schools cannot offer diversity, equity and inclusion training or use DEI requirements in job descriptions.

- Schools must eliminate scholarships that use DEI, unless donors require them to do so. They cannot accept any funds for scholarships in the future that have DEI requirements.

- Each college must respond to complaints about a professor, administrator or student who interferes with “intellectual diversity,” defined in the bill as “multiple, divergent, and varied perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues.”

- Each professor shall post a course syllabus online and include the instructor’s professional qualifications and their contact information. This won’t be required until the 2026-2027 academic year.

-Schools must declare that professors will allow and encourage students to reach their own conclusions about all “controversial beliefs,” defined as issues such as climate change, electoral politics, foreign policy, DEI, immigration policy, gay marriage and abortion.

-Students must take a three-hour American “civic literacy” course that includes “a study of the American economic system and capitalism.” The course contains a list of documents students must read in the course, including the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence and at least five essays from the Federalist Papers, Students who passed Advanced Placement or College Credit Plus course can be exempt, under a Tuesday amendment that a Senate committee adopted.

-Schools must post prominently online a list of all speaker fees, honoraria and other gifts in excess of \$500 for events.

-Faculty, who normally receive annual performance evaluations, will be subject to extra scrutiny through a new “post-tenure review” that schools must perform if professors do not meet certain performance expectations over three years. They may be terminated for cause, censured or referred for remedial training as a result of the reviews.

-Schools must submit a rolling, five-year description of institutional costs to the Ohio chancellor of higher education, who will submit a summary of it to the General Assembly during each operating and capital budget formation. The summaries must include instructor salaries and benefits and a complete accounting of DEI spending.

State Sen. Kristina Roegner, a Hudson Republican who ushered SB 1 through hearings as chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, said people should be able to speak without fear of being canceled.

“Unfortunately, higher ed across our nation largely has become a bastion of liberal bias,” she said. “True, there are instances where that is not the case but it has become pervasive enough that we must act.”

State Sen. Hearcel Craig, a Columbus Democrat, ticked off a list of conspiracy theories that he said have to be entertained in the classroom under SB 1.

“There are those who want to deny the Holocaust and the 6 million Jewish lives that were taken, those who are downplaying the barbarity and the cruelty of the Middle Passage -- they seek to minimize the pain and destruction caused by the slave trade,” Craig said. “... The United States forcibly interned Japanese Americans into

internment camps. This damaged countless American citizens, many of whom were serving and supporting our nation in the military.”

Sen. Andrew Brenner, a Delaware County Republican, said DEI is racist in practice.

“It also contradicts the core ideals of Martin Luther King Jr., and the civil rights movement,” he said. “Rather than fostering equality, DEI reinforces racial divisions, prioritizes group identity over individual merit and creates the very discrimination it claims to be fighting.”

Sen. Catherine Ingram, a Cincinnati Democrat, disagreed.

“I am sick and tired of people quoting Dr. Martin Luther King’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech,” she said. “If we were to look at the entire speech, before his ending about this hope of having a society that is colorblind, he talked about when the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men... would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious back in (1963) as well as today that America has faulted on that promissory note.”

Ingram also cautioned that DEI helps military veterans and students with disabilities.

But Ohio Senate President Rob McColley, a Henry County Republican, said that was hyperbole and that vets and disabled students would not be affected by the bill.

McColley also said that the overwhelming number of opponents was due to Ohio State University being close to the Ohio Statehouse.

“I would say we had an election where DEI and the impacts it has, for better or worse, was on the ballot,” he said. “The people of the state of Ohio and the people of the United States came out and voted for the candidate who was openly saying, ‘DEI needs to be dismantled.’”