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Ohio HB 698 — Testimony Template and Sample Messaging

HB 698, the dangerous “**SB 1** Compliance Supplemental Appropriation Act,” has a hearing next week.

- **WHEN:** Tuesday 5/12/26 at 10:00 am
- **WHERE:** Ohio Statehouse — Room 017

HB 698 goes to extreme measures to force more big government oversight onto Ohio’s public colleges and universities. For example, it requires the colleges/universities to explain why every employee whose job used to involve any sort of diversity, equity, or inclusion is still employed.

HB 698 threatens the funding of schools that refuse to comply with the bill’s egregious regulations and paperwork requirements. You can read the full [bill breakdown here](#), and read our [sample messaging below](#).

HB 698 is likely unconstitutional. The Ohio Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled since [at least 1939](#) that legislatures cannot force future legislatures to do anything (they can’t “obligate” future legislatures). This bill forces all future governors to include money in their proposed budgets that will only be given to Ohio’s public colleges and universities if they comply with SB 1.

The governor’s proposed budget is always introduced as a bill in the legislature. So this bill is an obvious effort to obligate future legislatures. It cannot be allowed to pass.

HOW TO TESTIFY AGAINST HB 698 (in-person OR written-only):

1.) Write your testimony

- See [testimony template below](#).
- See [messaging ideas below](#)
- **NOTE:** Committee Chair Tom Young is the sponsor of this bill. Keep his bias in mind when drafting your testimony! You are attempting to persuade his colleagues and the press rather than Chair Young himself.

2.) Upload your testimony to the Committee website – whether you’re testifying in-person or not

- Testimony [must be uploaded](#) to the [committee website](#) by Monday 5/11/26 at 10:00 am
- Make sure to fill out all the questions provided when you upload your testimony
 - *This replaces the “witness slip” previously used by Statehouse committees*

(If you're submitting written-only testimony, that's it! You're done! You officially testified written-only. If you're testifying in-person, see below.)

3.) Arrive at the Statehouse before the committee is scheduled to begin.

- **Parking recommendations:**
 - [The Ohio Statehouse underground garage](#)
 - Located underneath the Statehouse, 1 Capitol Square, Columbus, 43215
 - [Columbus Commons Underground Parking Garage](#)
 - 191 S. Third Street
 - [Columbus Commons Main Garage](#) (above ground)
 - 55 E. Rich Street & 56 E. Main Street
- **NOTE:** You'll need to go through a metal detector when you arrive at the Statehouse.
 - You'll put your bags, purse, phone, keys, and other items through a metal detector (similar to the airport but not as intense)
 - You will personally pass through a metal detector as well
- **Worried about getting lost in the Statehouse?** You can ask the security guards/state troopers at the metal detector to direct you to the committee room (Room 017)
- **NOTE:** Signs ARE permitted inside the Statehouse, but they are not permitted in the committee room

4.) Bring a printed copy of your testimony with you to read in front of the committee

- You **do not** have to read your testimony word for word! Many people don't!

5.) You may also want to bring copies to hand to reporters – you can contact [reporters](#) ahead of time to let them know you (and your group) will be testifying!

6.) AFTER YOU'RE FINISHED SPEAKING:

- **Legislators may ask you questions.** They are more likely to ask questions if you provide data/statistics or present yourself as having professional experience related to the bill. This can be awesome! But be prepared to back up your testimony!
- **After each question, try to** start your response with the words, "Through the Chair, to the Representative..."

AFTER THE COMMITTEE:

After the committee is over, we also recommend taking some additional steps to increase the impact of your testimony:

- **Contact the committee members** (be polite!), remind them about your testimony, and offer to meet/speak with them to discuss the issue further.
 - [SPREADSHEET: State House & Senate CONTACT Information](#) (2025 - 2026)

- Check out the tabs to find contact info for the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee
- **Find your testimony [on the HB 698 bill page](#)**, and share it on social media!
 - Urge others to contact the committee too
 - All written and in-person testimonies are posted online and shareable
- **Create a video clip** of yourself testifying, and share it on social media!
 - Urge others to contact the committee too
 - **Slideshow** — [How to pull video clips from OhioChannel.org](#)
 - **Document** — [How to pull video clips from OhioChannel.org](#)

TESTIMONY TEMPLATE:

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is _____. I am *[basic bio about who you are]*. I am *[strongly opposed to / have serious concerns about / deeply troubled by / etc.]* Ohio HB 698.

[Then tell them why! Make it short and sweet - a few paragraphs is perfect. Tell a personal story. Or explain why your job experience gives you this perspective on the bill. Maybe cite some statistics or case studies to back up your claims]

I ask you to consider my testimony and stop this *[harmful/dangerous/problematic/extreme/burdensome/unecessary/etc.]* bill from moving forward.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

[If you're testifying in-person] I will now take any questions you may have.

HB 698 MESSAGING IDEAS:

WHAT HB 698 WOULD DO:

- [Bill breakdown](#)
- Requires the governor to set aside some higher ed funding that would be withheld if schools don't comply with new requirements.
- Requires the state to maintain a searchable database of state, school district, and public college/university employee salary and employment information.
- Requires each state college and university to certify SB 1 compliance to the chancellor every year, and give chancellors the power to audit institutional records, require documentation, and conduct reviews to verify certification.
- Requires the chancellor, beginning in 2028, to withhold state funds from schools that fail to file SB 1 certifications, with penalties for "recklessly false or fraudulent certifications."

- Bans schools from “reassigning, reclassifying, or otherwise disguising” any position in order to continue DEI programs.
- Requires schools to prepare an inventory of all employees who used to perform diversity, equity, and inclusion functions and were reassigned after SB 1 became law.
- Requires schools to prepare an annual “justification report” on employees who used to work on DEI efforts. The report must contain:
 - An explanation of each employee's reassignment and side-by-side job comparisons for each employee showing that their new duties are substantially different from their previous jobs;
 - Itemized compensation breakdowns for each employee;
 - Compliance plans for ongoing review;
 - Certification by the president and chair of the board of trustees.
- The bill also further weakens and disrespects workers’ rights by including detailed workload and retrenchment policies and by giving boards of trustees power “to adopt, amend, or enforce additional provisions relating to retrenchment.”

SAMPLE MESSAGING:

- **HB 698 is next-level nanny-state, big government intervention.**
 - Example: It requires universities to explain why every single employee whose job used to involve diversity, equity, or inclusion is still employed? Are you kidding me? Who do Ohio politicians think they are?
 - *The bill requires all public colleges/universities to prepare an annual “justification report” on employees who used to work on DEI efforts. The report must contain:*
 - *An explanation of each employee's reassignment and side-by-side job comparisons for each employee showing that their new duties are substantially different from their previous jobs;*
 - *Itemized compensation breakdowns for each employee;*
 - *Compliance plans for ongoing review;*
 - *Certification by the president and chair of the board of trustees.*
- **HB 698 is very likely unconstitutional.**
 - The Ohio Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled since [at least 1939](#) that legislatures cannot force future legislatures to do anything (they can’t “obligate” future legislatures)
 - This bill forces all future governors for the rest of time to include money in their proposed budgets that will only be given to Ohio’s public colleges and universities if they comply with SB 1
 - The governor’s proposed budget is always introduced as a bill in the legislature. So this bill is absolutely attempting to obligate future legislatures. It’s incredibly sneaky and underhanded. It cannot be allowed to pass.
- **There were a record number of opponent testimonies against SB 1 last year**
 - [1,727 opponent testimonies](#)
 - 39 proponents
 - But instead of listening to Ohioans, instead of remembering that they work for us, Ohio Republicans are doubling down just a few months later with this ridiculous “SB 1 compliance” bill

- **HB 698 is completely unnecessary. We're already seeing extreme overcompliance with SB 1 across the state. There is zero reason for this bill**
 - **Here are just a few known outcomes from [Ohio SB 1](#)** (*which we call the Higher Education Destruction Act*) since it was signed into law last year:
 - [As SB 1 impacts ripple across Ohio college campuses, students, faculty say 'the chill is real'](#)
 - [Senate Bill 1 is reshaping Ohio public universities; 5 major changes](#)
 - [How Senate Bill 1 is reshaping majors at Ohio's public colleges](#)
 - [Ohio University to cut 11 academic programs to comply with new law](#)
 - [Citing Ohio's Sweeping Higher Ed Law, College Refuses to Sign Union Contract](#)
 - [A Youngstown State alum planned to leave the university \\$100,000. Senate Bill 1 changed his mind](#)
 - [FIRE gives Ohio State University, five other Ohio universities an "F" on latest free speech ranking](#)
 - [Ohio colleges see drop in international student enrollment](#)
 - [Ohio State enrolls 36% fewer first-year international students](#)
 - [UC sees 40% drop in new international grad students. What it means for Cincinnati](#)
 - [Ohio State dorms told to stick with Buckeyes themes, citing DEI concerns](#)
 - [Campus life in Ohio enters Senate Bill 1 era](#)
 - [Ohio State protestors direct anger at President Ted Carter after diversity offices are shut down](#)
 - This report blames SB1 for the elimination of "classes focusing on marginalized groups such as women's studies and African American studies" at BGSU: <https://bgfalconmedia.com/179457/news/bgsu-reconfigures-or-suspends-30-academic-programs/>
 - SB 1 is responsible for severe restrictions to student speech on campus. Ohio State, for example, [has even banned the use of sidewalk chalk in an effort to over-comply with SB 1](#)
- **We all know what HB 698 would do to Ohio. It would further shrink our colleges and universities. It would hurt our state economy. Why would the legislature pass this bill?**
 - Example: This bill makes clear that retrenchment can be initiated for pretty much any reason. One student dropping one class could be used as an excuse to end entire departments — leaving students and professors in a constant state of uncertainty.
 - *"Retrenchment" is the termination of academic programs or faculty positions, usually due to financial emergency.*

HB 698 RESOURCES:

- <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/136/hb698>
- [Bill breakdown](#)