

## **Opponent Testimony for H.B. 66**

**Submitted By**

**Dr. Amy Thompson, Professor of Public Health**

Chairman Duffy, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney, Members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, my name is Dr. Amy Thompson. For identification purposes, I am a tenured Professor of Public Health and the President of Faculty Senate at the University of Toledo. I am here today speaking on my own behalf and not representing any group on my views.

Substitute HB 66 requires that there be creation of “a committee to study and evaluate each state university’s contribution to the undergraduate mission, including, but not limited to, its efforts to ensure tenured faculty members participate in the undergraduate mission through face-to-face interaction with undergraduate students.” While I commend the House of Representatives commitment to ensuring the quality of educational delivery for undergraduate students, this legislation seems redundant and is an attempt to regulate something that is already highly regulated.

Most, if not all, universities have a number of committees staffed with educational experts that focus considerable time and effort on the development of curriculum and assessment of student learning. We are already highly regulated by the Higher Learning Commission who even requires us to determine if students are meeting institutional learning outcomes. The Higher Learning Commission conducts regular site visits and issue lengthy reports that already complete this work for you. These meticulous reviews are conducted by trained experts and universities are held to meeting any deficiencies named. What Representative Young is proposing in this legislation is another unfunded mandate that attempts to provide information that is already in existence.

If your interest is truly on the improvement and quality of undergraduate education, I draw your attention to the fact that every semester faculty members have student evaluations that are issued and analyzed. These are readily available through any public records request. It is also common place for faculty to be required to have peer evaluations and to be observed by department chairs and deans. There are also many resources that professors use on a regular basis for continuous improvement of curriculum development and educational delivery these include; teaching and learning centers, professional development workshops, and yearly professional reviews.

It is evident, there are well-established mechanisms for continuous improvement of undergraduate education program and educational instruction at Ohio Universities. My concern with HB 66 is that this legislation is merely one more attempt at removing the process of tenure and promotion at our institutions of higher education. I am sure this committee is well aware of the benefits of having a tenure and promotion system. As the President of the UT Faculty Senate, I can tell you that tenure is something that is very important and valued by our faculty. In my own leadership role, I am consistently advocating for many campus, student and faculty issues. I

would not be as comfortable or as effective as a campus leader in advocating for needed changes if tenure was repealed. Tenure and promotion creates a professional trajectory of excellence, provides the capacity to expand learning and research, promotes retention of quality faculty, and attracts many industry experts to higher education.

Again, I applaud the House of Representatives proposed efforts to improve the quality of higher education in our State. I would suggest a more effective measure would be to stop the continuous cutting of funding for higher education. Ohio is one of the more poorly funded states for higher education. With each subsequent budget cut there are resources that disappear that help provide needed services for our students.

Because of my own institutional budget cuts, I have had to reduce the resources I can provide to my classes because there is not money to print handouts or exams. I have had my administrative assistant laid off for a department of 30 faculty so there was no one present at the front desk to help greet and direct students when they need help. I have also seen student advisors let go who help students plan out their academic programs and problem solve crises for students. These budget cuts have long-term impacts on our enrollment and retention rates, which are the cornerstone of quality undergraduate education.

I strongly ask members of this committee to oppose H.B. 66. We already have many efficient mechanisms for the review of undergraduate education and determining the quality of faculty instruction. Instead of passing another unfunded mandate, I invite you to review the materials and resources that are already in existence. Thanks you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Amy Thompson