



Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors

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Testimony of Stephen Mockabee, Ph.D.

Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors

Senate Education Committee

Senator Peggy Lehner, Chair

March 14, 2018

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Steve Mockabee, and I am here in my capacity as government relations committee chair for the Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). We represent approximately 6,000 college and university faculty at both public and private, as well as two- and four-year, institutions of higher education in the state. I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Cincinnati.

I am here today to express my association's thoughts on Substitute House Bill 66.

We appreciate that Representative Young was open to amending the original version of the bill, and that the House Higher Education Committee worked with multiple stakeholder groups to improve the bill further. We also appreciate that Rep. Young and other members of the General Assembly see the value in tenured faculty teaching our undergraduate students. We agree that, too often, undergraduate courses are not taught by full-time faculty. But it is important to understand that this is not a function of tenured faculty not teaching enough or contributing in other meaningful ways to the university or undergraduate mission. This is a function of institutions not having enough full-time and tenured faculty and instead opting for adjuncts to teach an increasing load of undergraduate courses.

Ohio taxpayers and students should expect that they are paying for quality education by full-time faculty. Full-time faculty are the heart and soul of our institutions. Long after students graduate and administrators move on, it is the faculty who have the ties to the university community, provide service on committees and as student advisors, and raise the institutional profile through their research. Nevertheless, according to data from the Integrated Post-Secondary Educational Data System (IPEDS), less than 24% of Ohio university budgets are spent employing faculty. Surely, we should focus on increasing that percentage rather than attempting to micromanage the faculty who represent a fraction of that 24%.

The chart on the following page illustrates how many adjuncts (or part-time) faculty teach at our institutions and what percentage of the total faculty they comprise. Additionally, it shows in percentage terms how little it would take for institutions to convert adjunct positions to full-time ones.

Costs of Converting Part-Time Faculty to Full-Time Positions				
Institution	Part-Time Faculty	% of Faculty in Part-Time Positions	Cost of Converting 50% of Part-Time Faculty to Asst. Professorships as a % of Total Expenditures	Cost of Converting 50% of Part-Time Faculty to Instructorships as a % of Total Expenditures
Bowling Green	433	34.95%	4.51%	3.68%
Central State	89	46.35%	5.31%	4.00%
Cleveland State	608	51.88%	9.58%	8.99%
Kent State	1337	48.06%	7.54%	6.04%
Miami University	477	30.29%	3.94%	2.22%
Ohio State	1813	42.02%	1.55%	2.13%
Ohio University	869	43.47%	4.90%	4.47%
Shawnee State	161	51.94%	9.54%	7.10%
Akron	936	51.68%	8.73%	7.52%
Cincinnati	1250	43.97%	4.55%	3.25%
Toledo	317	26.48%	1.79%	1.34%
Wright State	165	17.76%	1.91%	1.23%
Youngstown State	565	56.27%	11.10%	8.50%

The second column in from the right shows the percentages of universities' budgets that it would require to convert 50% of adjunct positions to full-time, tenure-track assistant professorships. The column on the far right shows another option: the percentages of universities' budgets that it would require to convert 50% of adjunct positions to full-time, non-tenure track instructorship positions. These figures include the institutions' branch campuses. We used a 50% conversion rate, as an institution only would need to convert about that many positions in order to fulfill current teaching requirements. It is common for an adjunct to teach one to two courses per term at one institution, while full-time faculty typically teach two to four classes per term.

In percentage terms, these conversion rates do not seem unreasonable, but one may say that they translate to hefty dollar amounts. Certainly, universities' budgets are huge, and even just one to two percent would not be easy for institutions to shift immediately. However, conversion does not have to occur overnight. It would require a commitment from institutions and the state to develop multi-year plans to phase in more full-time positions. Institutions would have to prioritize the instructional mission and the state would have to increase state support. As state support has declined and tuition has been restrained, so has the number of full-time and tenured faculty.

At some point, the realization must be made that we get what we pay for. Our institutions of higher education have been holding the line with tuition and fee freezes, and without sufficient financial support from the state to make up for inflationary increases alone. That cannot continue forever with the expectation of maintaining academic quality. We hope to see continued efficiencies in non-instructional areas by our institutions, as well as increased support

from the state. Then we might get to a place where we have sufficient full-time and tenured faculty to meet the various needs of our great public colleges and universities.

My organization does not believe that Substitute HB 66 is necessary, but should it pass, we welcome the opportunity for members of the General Assembly to learn more about the work of tenured faculty. Should this committee continue to advance this bill, there are several ways in which it can be improved.

First, we ask the committee to reconsider the language calling for an external entity to review and grade each university in terms of how it encourages tenured faculty to contribute to the undergraduate mission. We question the rationale and purpose of such a grading. This committee should consider carefully the value of expending resources in this way.

Additionally, we take issue with the language that asks the committee to recommend how each state university could incorporate contribution to the undergraduate mission into its existing post-tenure review process. This incorrectly assumes that universities currently do not incorporate contribution to the undergraduate mission into their tenure review processes. Teaching is one of the three pillars of faculty evaluation, along with research and service. For many faculty, especially those teaching at regional branch campuses, or at institutions that do not offer graduate programs, undergraduate teaching forms the primary basis for tenure and promotion. This language is unnecessary and should be removed.

Furthermore, we note that there are to be chief academic officers from two universities on the committee, but otherwise no guidelines insuring that the committee is a broad cross-section representing Ohio's diverse institutions. The committee would look quite different if the representatives are from two large research institutions versus smaller undergraduate-centered campuses. We recommend keeping that in mind as the committee members are chosen.

Finally, a few thoughts on tenure. Tenure is a mechanism for protecting academic freedom, which is the core principle of the AAUP. Academic freedom is the ability to teach and research without fear of interference, censorship, or retaliation. It preserves the intellectual integrity of our educational system and thus serves the public good. By having tenure, and thus protection of their academic freedom, faculty are able to engage in those sometimes uncomfortable classroom discussions that are key to developing students' critical thinking skills – the skills all employers seek. Faculty also are able to pursue lines of research that may be controversial, but are necessary to the educational pursuit and innovation. Ohio should be cautious in its treatment of tenure. Attacking or micromanaging tenure will hinder our institutions' ability to attract and retain quality faculty.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions you may have.