

Testimony re HB 49

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My name is Anna Babel and I am an assistant professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the Ohio State University. If the Board of Trustees approves my tenure case, I will be awarded tenure this summer. I just wanted to take advantage of the chance to tell you what the real life of a tenure-track professor looks like.

What does it take to be in my shoes? I hold a dual Ph.D. in Linguistics and Anthropology from the University of Michigan, one of the top anthropology programs in the country, where I was supported in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation. Before coming to OSU I held a postdoctoral position at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, in the most prestigious Romance Languages department in Germany. I have eleven peer-reviewed articles and book chapters to my name, I recently published an edited volume with Cambridge University Press, and I am finishing a book manuscript that will be published by Arizona University Press. I co-edit a monthly column for a professional society. I've given peer-reviewed talks at sixteen major conferences and invited talks at thirteen conferences, including a keynote at the Argentine National Linguistics Society last year. I advise graduate students – two of my MA students have already graduated, and my first PhD student will finish his degree next year. And I have taught four courses a year for the past six years, except during my maternity leave (which I will return to in a moment). My teaching evaluations typically range between 4.5 and 5.0 on a 5-point scale.

I am fairly average among my colleagues. Some of the people sitting here in this room have much more impressive resumes.

Counting from the beginning of my graduate program, I have spent thirteen years working towards tenure. My household income did not break the poverty level until I started working at OSU in 2011. Since starting at OSU, my salary has ranged from \$63K to \$69K a year, a typical salary for an assistant professor in the humanities. My annual raises have varied from 0.5% to 2.5% per year. Unfortunately, no publishers have romanced me in order to influence me to assign their books.

My job has three parts: research, teaching, and administrative service. I am supposed to spend 40% of my time on teaching, 40% on research, and 20% on service. In fact, I spend about 50% on teaching, 60% on research, and 30% on service. If you're wondering how I do that, it's because I work a lot. Like most of my colleagues, I am on a 9-month contract, but I typically work 12 months a year – three months without pay – in order to make the most of my summer for research. I

also advise graduate students, serve on graduate committees, and do outreach and community service for my department during my “time off” as well.

Lazy or avaricious people do not choose academics as a career. I often joke with my friends that the reason the tenure system works is because the only people who make it to tenure are such insane workaholics that they just don’t know when to stop. It’s only funny because it’s true.

I’m sure many of you are rightfully proud of the Ohio State University’s status as an R1 (research-intensive) institution. I am as well. I chose to come to the Ohio State University over a better offer from a small liberal arts college because I knew that OSU would give me the chance to focus on my research, and would have the resources to support that research. So far that has been true. However, I’m worried about the budget cuts that you are considering today.

Some of my colleagues have spoken about other aspects of these measures. I wanted to talk about the proposed cuts to sick leave. See, in addition to all of the things I do for my professional life, I have two children. Because of the length of time that it takes to complete a PhD and find an academic job, the tenure track years are also the prime reproductive years for women. My son was born in my second year at OSU. I worked right up to my due date and then took eight weeks of maternity leave. Six weeks paid leave were provided by OSU. The other two weeks came from sick leave. I would have liked to have taken more, but I could not afford to take unpaid leave. If didn’t have that sick leave, I would have returned to the classroom after my six weeks were up, leaving my baby in daycare. The extra two weeks made a difference for me; it took me to the end of the semester, so although I was “on duty” for graduate examinations and service after eight weeks, I did not have to return to the classroom.

The proposed budget measures will weaken the tenure system and will reduce benefits for all university employees. You will find it harder to recruit top candidates for academic positions, and there will be an exodus of high-performing professors to other institutions. This is not in the best interests of the state of Ohio, and it is not in the best interests of the students who deserve a first-class public university in their home state.