



June 24, 2021

Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee:

I am pleased to offer my proponent testimony in favor of Senate Bill 126, also known as Collin's Law: The Ohio Anti-Hazing Act. This bi-partisan legislation is an important step toward eliminating hazing at Ohio colleges and universities.

Those of us in higher education are dedicated to developing our college students to be the leaders of tomorrow, and there is no place for hazing in that development. It is unacceptable, and we welcome the tools this legislation provides to help eradicate it from our campuses.

I support this legislation, as does The Ohio State University as an institution. SB 126, as introduced, aligns with our values, our educational and administrative efforts, and new efforts currently underway.

The additional criminal offenses, including the provisions for those who fail to report hazing, will send a clear message that hazing is not to occur at our institutions, and that there are consequences in state law for violators.

The education and training component, as well as support from the Chancellor of Higher Education, will enhance the efforts already in place to teach students why hazing is unacceptable, and to offer alternatives that encourage them to make connections with other students in a safe and healthy manner.

Ohio State is well along the path outlined in this bill. Our university's Code of Student Conduct has long prohibited hazing and was amended in 2019 to also prohibit the failure to intervene, prevent or report hazing. Our Student Life Student Conduct department takes every report of violations very seriously and conducts complete and detailed investigations that can result in sanctions on individuals and student organizations. Student Conduct reports all allegations of hazing to law enforcement, including OSUPD and Columbus Police. Student Conduct has a direct channel of communication with Columbus Police specifically for hazing reports.

Educational efforts are vital to our approach. Student Conduct regularly provides training and education opportunities relative to hazing to a wide variety of students and student organizations. In addition, our Sorority and Fraternity Life department within the Office of Student Life provides hazing prevention education opportunities for all current and incoming members. During the summer, they host new student/parent and family sessions where participants learn about our community, campus anti-hazing policies and reporting resources.

The Sorority and Fraternity community participates in the September National Hazing Prevention Week with educational programming and an awareness campaign. In March, nearly 800 students from Ohio State and other colleges and universities in Ohio gathered virtually to learn about this legislation.

I am encouraged that the sponsors are proposing changes to the Ohio Revised Code. A statewide approach will enable shared understanding and education, set common expectations across campuses, and set the foundation for important cultural shifts among sorority and fraternity communities across the state. Likewise, elevating this issue on a state level will advance individual campus's efforts to amplify the dangers and mitigation opportunities of this important issue.

I would respectfully recommend that the committee consider adding a provision similar to those found in other parts of the Ohio Revised Code providing an avenue for amnesty to those who act without regard or concern for their own liability to aid others in need of medical assistance. Ohio State recognized this important need when we last amended our Code of Student Conduct, which now provides amnesty from minor policy violations for those who seek assistance for others in need.

Eliminating hazing is an important goal for The Ohio State University, and I believe SB 126 will provide important support and the state level and allow us to expand and enhance our efforts.

I urge your favorable consideration of Collin's Law

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa S. Shivers".

Melissa S. Shivers, PhD
Senior Vice President for Student Life
The Ohio State University