



## **Testimony on Senate Bill 126**

### **Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education**

### **March 31, 2021**

Thank you, Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, for allowing me to submit written testimony on behalf of Ohio's independent, nonprofit colleges and universities and their students. My name is C. Todd Jones and I am president and general counsel of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio.

AICUO represents 51 nonprofit institutions of higher education in our state. Our members educate nearly 131,000 students, and award about one-third of the baccalaureate degrees in Ohio each year, and an even higher share of our state's degrees in mathematics, natural and biological sciences, and other key areas of study.

Undoubtedly, the events that led to the need for this legislation are extremely sad, but with the help of Senate Bill 126, they will not be repeated. Ohio's independent higher education institutions strive to be a place of safety and education for both students and their families.

AICUO is proud to support Senate Bill (SB) 126, Collin's Law, and thanks Senators Kunze and Gavarone for their leadership on this important issue. Ohio's independent colleges take hazing very seriously and look forward to working with the State to stop any more senseless tragedies from happening.

Specifically, AICUO supports the expansion of hazing to also include forced consumption of drugs and alcohol – perhaps the deadliest form of hazing. SB 126 also increases the legal penalties for those who knowingly participate in hazing activities from a misdemeanor to a felony. AICUO believes this is needed to help deter students from participating in this banned activity, and to help law enforcement officials ensure that anyone responsible faces serious consequences.

AICUO and our institutions also welcome the opportunity to work with the Ohio Department of Higher Education to develop best practices for a statewide educational plan. Through this work, it would be clear that hazing prevention is a priority for all of Ohio. Anytime institutions of differing sizes and regions can work together collaboratively, it means that all students are better served.

While no AICUO institution permits hazing, it is clear that there is always more work to be done. Our campuses look forward to the opportunity this legislation provides to further student education on the dangers of hazing, and to help professionally train faculty and staff.