



Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee
Senate Bill 126 Proponent Testimony
May 26, 2021

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee, my name is Kimberly Moore, I am the Dean of Students at Miami University. My colleague, Ann James, Director of the Office of Community Standards will assist me in testifying today. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 126.

Miami University has zero tolerance for hazing and we strictly prohibit any acts that humiliate, demean, or risk the health and safety of potential new members as a way to prove themselves or “earn” their way into full membership in any organization. We support our state legislators in their efforts to strengthen Ohio’s laws against hazing. Hazing violates the Miami University Code of Student Conduct, the Ohio Revised Code, and the policies of every fraternity and sorority recognized by Miami University.

Hazing can take many forms and can lead to devastating consequences. Hazing is described as any incident or activity that may cause mental or physical harm to a student looking to join an organization. Hazing is based on the premise that some members are less equal than other members and, therefore, less deserving of respect. It is rationalized by the philosophy that membership is earned, not learned. Hazing especially undermines new member education programs by eroding the atmosphere of mutual respect and trust necessary for groups to contribute to the positive personal growth of all members.

The National Collaborative on Hazing Research and Prevention has conducted the most comprehensive national study on hazing to date, surveying more than 11,000 students from 53 universities and colleges across the United States. The study found that, unfortunately, more than half of college students involved in clubs, teams, and organizations experience hazing. According to a 2008 study by StopHazing.Org, the most common hazing behaviors included participating in a drinking game (53%); singing or chanting in public in a situation that is not a related event, game, or practice (31%); drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out (26%); being awakened at night by other members (19%); and being yelled, screamed, or cursed at by other members (18%).

Miami University will always place the safety and welfare of our students above any perceived negative press. This is evident in the actions that the University took with

respect to the horrific incident involving Tyler Perino, who you heard from at the last committee hearing on S.B. 126. Ann James, Director of the Office of Community Standards will share with you the conduct process that Mr. Perino participated in.

Thank you Kimberly. Upon learning of the incident that Mr. Perino experienced and subsequently reported, the University began a full and thorough investigation to determine what happened and to ensure the safety of our students. From the beginning of that investigation through the adjudication process, I was in awe of Mr. Perino's courage in reporting this information and his commitment to the safety of our Miami community. I want to sincerely thank Mr. Perino for stepping up and reporting the hazing he experienced, and for seeing it all the way through the process to testify in front of the Ohio Senate.

The university conduct process in which Mr. Perino participated in, was comprised of an investigation and subsequent hearings for the organization, Delta Tau Delta, and 12 Miami University students. In addition, due to the safety concerns outlined in the report, Delta Tau Delta was suspended pending the completion of the student conduct process. This action kept the organization from operating while the investigation and hearing process took place.

The outcomes of the student conduct process included the suspension of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity from Miami University for 15 years, 9 students were dismissed (permanently removed) from Miami University, and 3 students were assigned other disciplinary sanctions (i.e. disciplinary probation).

While the University was engaged in the student conduct process, there was a separate process playing out in the legal system. The student conduct process and criminal/legal process are completely separate and unrelated. Oftentimes, outcomes of the student conduct process are different and can have a more significant immediate impact on the student long-term than the criminal/legal process does. The worst penalty that we can give a student is dismissal, which requires a lower standard of evidence than the legal system, where a prosecutor can pursue incarceration.

In this case, no student was incarcerated or found guilty of anything more than a misdemeanor through the criminal/legal process. However, 9 students were permanently removed from Miami University and are not permitted to be present on the campus or attend classes here again. Additionally, there is a permanent notation on their transcripts that indicates that they were dismissed from the University.

This past academic year of 2020-2021, we investigated 5 fraternities as a result of hazing allegations. None of the reports we have received are anywhere near the severity of the

case involving Delta Tau Delta, but we don't know if that is because there have been no physical assaults, or if we haven't had a student who is willing to speak out like Mr. Perino. And just because hazing doesn't take a physical form, as it did in Mr. Perino's case, it does not mean that other hazing activities won't have a lasting impact on our students. We fully support this legislation because it will help other students understand how serious the University takes hazing as well as how serious the criminal system takes this behavior. This may help other students to come forward knowing that the University and the community as a whole support them through the process.

Kimberly will address the initiatives and actions the University has taken to eliminate hazing on campus.

Thank you, Ann. Prior to the incident involving Mr. Perino, we had begun to work with students and advisors to take steps towards changing the culture of Greek Life at Miami. This was a result of receiving several anonymous reports of hazing across multiple years, none of which provided enough information to act on through our conduct system. After Mr. Perino's hazing incident, we continued to focus on changing campus culture and more students became active participants in being a part of a solution. The result was our Honoring Fraternity Report, which includes changes to help fraternities in particular promote courageous and ethical leadership, focus on academic excellence, and prevent some of the troubling national trends around hazing, abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and sexual and interpersonal violence. Some of those new initiatives include:

- Mandatory education about fraternal values and the purpose of Greek life, an anti-hazing module, and a two part leadership course which students must complete to be eligible to accept an invitation of membership.
- New Member Convocation which details appropriate and inappropriate activities, resources, and reporting options related to hazing.
- Greeks Step Up, an evidenced based bystander intervention program facilitated by Peer Educators and leaders within the fraternity and sorority community. (topics addressed include Hazing, Sexual Violence, and Alcohol and Drug Abuse)
- New member education plans and current member development plans submitted by each chapter that include a calendar of activities and description of each event prior to recruitment. A letter is also sent to parents explaining the member education process.
- All fraternity houses must have a live-in advisor in order to house sophomore students, who are otherwise required to live on campus.

- Chapter leadership and advisors are required to be on site during recruitment, and the new member period was shortened to four weeks. A national staff member or advisor must be present at initiation events.
- Sororities have a three week new member experience, and social events are limited in scope and number.
- Members of sororities who wish to serve as a big sister must complete a Big Sis training session.
- The GPA requirement for fraternity recruitment eligibility was raised to a 2.75 from a 2.5.
- A Scorecard was implemented reporting community standards. This report provides information on academics, service/philanthropy, chapter conduct and status and compliance with chapter requirements.

We are currently assessing the effectiveness of these efforts, and will continue to adapt our anti-hazing plan to maximize success over time. Thank you for your time today, we are happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.

Dr. Kimberly Moore, Dean of Students

Dr. Ann James, Director of the Office of Community Standards