

Testimony of Scot Kaplan Professor OSU
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
May 17, 2023

Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Scot Kaplan, and I am a professor in the Department of Art at The Ohio State University (I am not representing OSU I am submitting testimony as a private citizen). I have been working in education for nearly 30 years, having taught or lectured at universities in the US and abroad, including the Royal College of Art London, University of Edinburgh, Stellenbosch University in South Africa as well as Ohio Northern and Ohio University. I have taught across the academic spectrum from community college to the Ivy League, and from major metropolitan areas like NYC to Marion County, where I do my undergraduate teaching. I have worked extensively outside of academia as well, as a laborer in building construction and as a designer at Fortune 500 companies including Viacom.

The breadth and scope of my work and educational experience is significant to today's hearing. Issues like this tend to be positioned as oppositional between those in the ivory tower and those that swing a hammer and having uniquely experienced both I can speak with experience that this legislation benefits neither.

I am not a clean, soft, hands person, I know the difference between a torque wrench and an impact wrench, I know that a ten penny nail doesn't cost a dime and that farmers rod is for welding not for little bo peep. It's the stuff your constituents know and. Mine is a voice that they should hear about the relevance of this issue to them. .

I am the type of person that should have been contacted if someone was going to investigate the subject of academic inclusion and tenure review, but let's enter into this process with open eyes; it is not best research and pedagogical practices that are driving this issue, it is politics.

It is widely documented that between 30-40% of American's hold a college degree, which suggests that 60-70% of people do not seem to be affected by this legislation. When we further identify that white men without a college degree serve as the base of the current Republican party this seems to lower this percentage even further within the constituency of the framers of this legislation. SO one might ask why are these representatives spending time making this their priority?

Again to be clear eyed, this bill is not for their voting base it is simply against their opponent's voting base (college educated, non-white people), it doesn't seek to help anyone it just to tries to hurt someone.

But let's understand how this poorly considered piece of demonstrably uninformed legislation negatively affects the voters and neighbors or those who have crafted it.

Upon initial review it may seem that that this bill does not have direct consequence upon non college directed voters or their families, however it is easy to see that this bill does affect the doctors that care for these constituents, and the bankers that fund their farms and businesses and homes, it affects the nurses that care for their parents and children and the social workers that help them through challenging circumstances, it affects the veterinarians that help their small and large animals, the business people who help create their jobs and the military officers that help our nation, all of whom attend higher education, and who have not shown up here in mass today, to decry a system that the politicians are telling us suppressed their rights of expression and prevented them from having a safe environment for broad based inclusive learning.

We all know the value of a college education it has been well documented in creating over a million dollars of personal wealth for those with degrees; degree holders live longer, have fewer health issues, are less likely to be in need of government services, all while paying more and higher taxes and being the central agent of job creation.

But the representatives here today are not spending their time in political office expanding college accessibility, lowering costs, providing free childcare or elder care for their constituents who wish to be students. They seem to feel that the lives of their constituents are made better by spending time on college professor's systems of review and curriculum modifications, so that we the faculty of the Ohio universities can be more broadly inclusive of flat earth theory, intelligent design, the idea that the US never landed on the Moon, the fallacious link between vaccines and autism and that John Kennedy is coming back to life in some coup detente surprise party that only students can speak about because faculty are forbidden for fear of tenure revocation.

To be clear as identified in this legislation for a faculty union to strike is a denial of classroom time that students have paid for but mandating time for the inclusion of flat earth discussions is giving students what they paid for.

Let's look further at the consequences of this legislation.

Ohio State which is the flagship university in the State of Ohio, is clearly not the flagship public institution in the country, in fact it is not even the flagship institution in the Big 10. By way of example the University of Michigan has 26 noble laureates associated with it, University of Illinois 30, University of Minnesota 30, University of Wisconsin 26, Northwestern 22, Purdue 9, University of Maryland 9, Indiana University 8, Rutgers 6, Ohio State has.....One.

To be clear the representatives here today are not spending this time enhancing the research profile of Ohio universities, to make them more competitive, they are spending tax payer's time

mandating that college students read “Letters from a Birmingham Jail” while refusing to let us discuss the recent ending of the voting rights act.

Within the sphere of academia Nobel award winners bring recognition and enhanced reputation, grant funding and enrollment to their institutions. As such students who graduate from these institutions have better resumes and get better jobs with better pay.

Professors, who are a considerable cause of the enhanced rankings of universities, take positions because of the significance of the university, which helps promote grant applications, and also because of tenure, which provides job security and research and instructional freedom. Without these vital and established institutional standards being present in Ohio Universities the best academic faculty will simply go to other research institutions, thereby decreasing the quality and ranking of statewide institutions, and subsequently underserving the citizens of Ohio both in academics and beyond as they compete in the global employment marketplace.

To be clear the rules that you are proposing will drive away faculty who will happily take positions at Michigan, Northwestern, Rutgers, Maryland, Wisconsin and Illinois, and this in turn puts Ohioans at a disadvantage in work, and care, and income, which seems the opposite of what you should be doing with the time that the citizens of Ohio have paid for.

Thank you for your consideration.