

Chair Young and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am a seasoned university professor testifying in opposition to HB6. I am also a nurse, and I know that healthcare clients need professionals who must be trained in current knowledge of scientific advancements grounded in facts and evidence, not opinion or belief. I am concerned about language in HB6 that appears to put narrow sideboards around language of disciplines. How much time must be provided for freedom of expression of unsupported opinions, when the time frame of 120 credits of state mandated curriculum is brief and requires providing much information in a short period of time. We also expect future nurses to become advocates for the vulnerable of society with documented health disparities related to race, gender, poverty, geographic location, mental and physical disabilities, etc. Academic freedom requires open discourse about such disparities even if occasionally politically controversial or socially contentious or should happen to fall under concepts such as Diversity Equity and Inclusion. DEI initiatives protect rights of the some of the most vulnerable in civilized societies and should not be banished from the entire U.S. lexicon.

I oppose several proposed rules of HB6 targeting faculty as competent educators. One such rule stipulates creating unnecessary evaluation and monitoring of faculty, adding time and expense to annual evaluations already being completed. Student evaluations are important quality improvement measures already used and weighed by all tenured and non-tenured faculty and administrators. Other rules aim to strip away so many protections (e.g. post tenure reviews, terminate for cause) as to effectively eliminate meaningful tenure. Limitations of collective bargaining such as prohibiting the right to strike undermine fundamental labor rights. I judge the foundational claim for this provision that university instructors align with safety workers such as hospital staff, law enforcement or first responders to be a spurious one at best. Further, I request removal of vague definitions of “retrenchment,” “fiscal pressure” or “emergencies” in terms so broad that they could easily be weaponized to terminate faculty and/or programs of study.

There are shortages of registered nurses in my community in northeast Ohio and the average nurse is 43+ years of age. SB1 contains multiple needless provisions that will further weaken the foundation of education in our state, having already lost ground in national education rankings in recent years. HB6 will not attract qualified teachers, students, or business partners to this state. It will not grow our intellectual capital, our economy, Students in Ohio have already been speaking out, threatening to matriculate to other states since the Ohio Senate moved SB1 forward.

I respectfully request your careful consideration of my concerns regarding HB6. If you will not consider amending this bill, I ask for your “No” vote on this harmful legislation. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lori I. Kidd". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

Lori I. Kidd, PhD, RN

Associate Professor, School of Nursing, College of Health and Human Sciences

The University of Akron

