

Testimony of Claire Underwood
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio and members of the Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Claire Underwood, I moved to Ohio to pursue my education and research that tackles pressing environmental and educational challenges. Like many graduate students and faculty, I intended to build a career here, to invest my knowledge and expertise in Ohio's academic community. However, if HB6 passes, it will directly threaten my ability to secure employment in higher education, making Ohio a less viable place for scholars who value academic freedom, inclusion, and innovation. This is not just about my future—it is about the future of Ohio's universities. Restricting DEI initiatives and curbing faculty rights will drive away top-tier educators and researchers, weakening Ohio's academic reputation and economic competitiveness.

The bill's prohibition on faculty strikes further erodes educators' ability to advocate for fair working conditions—conditions that are crucial to maintaining high-quality education. Silencing faculty voices will not improve higher education; it will create a system in which underpaid, overburdened educators struggle to provide students with the opportunities and support they deserve.

HB 6 and SB 1 represent an attack on academic freedom, intellectual rigor, and the ability of Ohio's universities to remain competitive on a national and global scale. I urge you to consider the long-term consequences of this legislation. Weakening our higher education system will not just affect faculty and students—it will harm Ohio's economy, workforce development, and standing as a center for academic excellence. I respectfully ask that you oppose this bill to protect the integrity, inclusivity, and future of Ohio's universities.

Thank you for your consideration.