

Opponent Testimony for SB 1/HB 6
House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
March 7, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony. My name is Stacie Novelli, and I live in Fairlawn Ohio. I am the parent of a young child in elementary school and an active volunteer with the PTA. Education is a passionate issue for me.

As a parent and Ohio citizen, I have serious concerns about Senate Bill 1 and its companion bill, House Bill 6, which I believe will have a detrimental impact on the future of higher education in Ohio. I urge you to vote NO on this harmful bill.

It is important to note that this bill is not a new proposal but is instead a revised version of Senate Bill 83, which was introduced in the previous legislative session. That bill was met with overwhelming opposition, with over 500 testimonies submitted by concerned individuals, including parents, students, and educators. In this session, Senate Bill 1 was met with over 800 written opposition testimonies. The intense opposition to this bill should serve as a powerful reminder that the concerns raised were not only legitimate but shared by many Ohioans who are deeply invested in the success of our state's colleges and universities.

As a parent, I am particularly concerned about how this bill could weaken Ohio's colleges and universities by banning diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, preventing faculty from striking, regulating rules around classroom discussion, and jeopardizing scholarships, among other damaging measures. This would diminish the educational opportunities available to my child and countless other students across the state. The bill's potential to undermine academic freedom and reduce the quality of higher education in Ohio will likely force families like mine to consider sending our children out of state to pursue their education. This is not a decision any parent wants to make, but it is one that could become necessary if Ohio's educational landscape is compromised.

What is even more troubling is the larger, long-term impact this will have on Ohio's economy. If more and more students are forced to attend colleges and universities outside of Ohio, the state will suffer significant losses in both talent and revenue. These students would contribute to the workforce and the economy if they were able to attend Ohio institutions. Instead, they would become part of the "brain drain," taking their skills, talents, and future earnings to other states.

The economic impact of this exodus would be profound, leading to fewer highly skilled workers available to contribute to Ohio's economy, fewer businesses able to recruit top talent, and a loss of vital revenue generated by tuition, housing, and other educational-related spending.

It is also important to highlight that our state's colleges and universities play an essential role in driving innovation, fostering a competitive workforce, and ensuring that Ohio remains a vibrant and prosperous place for future generations. By weakening these institutions, SB 1 would significantly hinder Ohio's ability to compete in an increasingly globalized and knowledge-based economy.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge you to vote NO On this bill. I implore you to listen to the many voices of Ohioans who have already spoken out against this proposal, as well as the families who, like mine, are deeply concerned about the future of higher education in our state. The potential consequences of SB 1 on Ohio's economy, educational institutions, and families are far too great to ignore.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Stacie Novelli