

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1
Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
March 7, 2025

Amy Koshoffer, MLIS, MS
Private Citizen

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

My name is Amy Koshoffer and I am a Librarian at the University of Cincinnati. I have lived in Ohio my entire life and love my city of Cincinnati. I have also spent my entire professional career as a Librarian. I do not represent the views of the University of Cincinnati but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1, Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act.

This is the fourth time in the past year that I submitted testimony in opposition to Ohio bills that promote a narrow perspective on how our public universities in Ohio should function. HB6 aims to fix a problem that our university faculty, our students, and our state businesses do not feel needs a fix. As elected public officials, your role is to listen to and act on the will of the people. Forms of this legislation containing similar language have already been rejected by most people giving prior testimony, and this demonstrates that the people of Ohio want a different environment at our universities than this bill promotes.

This bill contains language that is very vague and will cause confusion and possibly hamper the intellectual development of our students. For example, the phrases "Controversial belief or policy" and "intellectual diversity" could be applied when faculty want to educate on topics such as politics, sociology, biology etc. Students can claim their intellectual diversity is being denied because they argue for their opinion, not evidence-based facts. Despite the expertise and scholarship of the faculty, students can make erroneous claims counter to what is already understood as fact by global communities. It is if we are asking our students to ignore what is going on in our world and act on what they believe rather dig into issues and understand the evidence. The world is a complicated, messy place with great variation in ideas and perspectives. We need to train our students to navigate complex problems, gather and understand evidence, and learn to work with people who will challenge their world view. The way the bill is written, faculty may not feel secure to hold class discussions about ideas that even just one student could deem a controversial issue. We will do our students a disservice as they will not have the experience of asserting themselves of their own beliefs and learning to defend their beliefs with evidence. In higher education, faculty guide students to develop information and data literacy skills and learn to understand what makes evidence and how it supports their arguments. Faculty are scholars and experts in the areas they teach in and do research. We do not expect any person to do surgery, but rely on trained expertise

with our health and wellbeing. Faculty undergo the same level of study and training and are as knowledgeable in their respected fields. We are not indoctrinating our students with only a liberal viewpoint rather faculty are developing courses around long time research and peer reviewed scholarship. By having discussions about difficult topics, faculty and instructors in Ohio's public universities help students prepare to tackle the wicked problems that have eluded solutions until now.

And as a woman, the language in the bill about collective bargaining is very upsetting. Women earn less money than their male counterparts. The ability to advocate for better working conditions is empowered by the collective and there is no plan in place to help faculty increase salaries or even to keep them up with the cost of living. Ohio public universities already have lower salaries than other public institutions in other states. Taking away collective bargaining will mean our salaries will not keep up with the cost of living and will make it hard to continue to keep the great faculty we have and to recruit new faculty members.

I am very concerned that potential future Bearcats will choose schools in other states that are more embracing of the whole student. The current environment is very threatening to our black and brown colleagues and students. They express fear and a sense that we are returning to the views and practices of the 1950's. Beyond the absurdity of the exclusionary practices of those times, they had extreme economic impacts. If we only look at the financial impacts, the current political climate will hurt our economy. Talented students, staff, and faculty will go elsewhere and this will hurt our institutions. We are facing the enrollment cliff and we need to make our institutions as welcoming as possible and the best educational choice for all students, staff and faculty.

This bill only seems to be an attack on higher education but does not offer incentives and innovative ideas for investing in higher education and the amazing people that make it work. I am a long-time bearcat and am proud of my university and the work we do to prepare our students for the future. This bill only makes that job harder.

I strongly oppose SB 6.