

Testimony of Max Orr, M.Ed and English Teacher  
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair  
March 11, 2025

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

My name is Max Orr, and I am a teacher of English literature at Marysville Early College High School, where I have taught for 8 years. I do not represent Marysville schools but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I also have 2 degrees from Ohio's public universities, and I want to express my disgust and disappointment at the notion that Ohio's representatives would even consider passing SB1 or its clone, HB6. I have every expectation that you will do what is right for Ohio and use every bit of your platform and power to oppose these economically-ruinous, anti-intellectual, anti-worker, pro-authoritarian bills.

Ohio needs to attract the brightest, most promising young people from around the nation to continue being a state of innovation and economic power. However, as these bills are a muzzle on free speech and a dangerous suppressant upon critical thought, they will have the opposite effect. SB1/HB6 would create a powerful disincentive to any ambitious 18-year-old hoping to spend their tuition dollars in Ohio, to expand their worldview, and to engage in the genuine free exchange of ideas. They will chase away academics and professors looking for job security and the opportunity to further their careers, which will in turn cause irreparable damage to the reputation of Ohio's universities and schools across the world. From a purely economic standpoint — disregarding the moral ramifications — these blows will be a serious blow to the state's economy, competitiveness, and future.

The freedom to ask questions, think critically, and pursue truth are fundamental human freedoms that millions of Americans have fought and died to uphold over the last 200 years, and this bill threatens them. I am a proud American, and nothing is more antithetical to the American ethos than stifling the voices of students and teachers, instituting a culture of fear and uncertainty where reality is bent to match the political ideology of a loud minority. When I teach my students about McCarthyism and the red scare, they are astonished to learn of the era when America allowed its base fears and paranoias to destroy communities and threaten free thought everywhere. History will not look kindly upon you if you help usher in another such era — I promise you.

Moreover, the anti-labor components of HB6 and SB1 expose the contempt that some of our legislators feel for working Americans. By outlawing striking among faculty members and gutting the protections of tenure, these bills echo the days of the Haymarket Riots and the Pullman Strike. They communicate a deep disdain for everyday Americans and their right to fair wages, safe working conditions, and organized labor — rights that our ancestors fought and died for against the greedy owner class. Voting down these bills is your chance to show

the people of Ohio that you hold an iota of respect for and duty toward them and that you are not completely in the pocket of private industry, jumping at the chance to enrich yourself and further cozy up to lobbying interests. These bills are tremendously unpopular. I'm sure I don't have to tell you that SB1 received 800 submissions of bipartisan testimony against it and only 10 in favor of it. As our elected officials, your entire job is to represent us and our concerns. Do your job and be our voice: Push back on these disastrous, anti-democratic pieces of legislation. Do the right thing.

Thank you

Max Orr

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