

To: [OHRWorkforceAndHigherEducationCommittee@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:OHRWorkforceAndHigherEducationCommittee@ohiohouse.gov)

Testimony

Chair, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jennifer McCord, and I am here to strongly oppose House Bill 6 / Senate Bill 1.

I am 41 years old and have spent the majority of my life in Ohio. I moved here in 8th grade, attended high school in Brecksville, and went on to Ohio University for a year before transferring to The Ohio State University, where I earned my Business Administration degree with a focus in marketing. After a decade in the private sector, I transitioned to higher education and now serve as a tenured assistant professor at Columbus State Community College.

I adamantly believe that education is the most powerful tool for individual and societal progress. Today, with the rapid expansion of AI, critical thinking has never been more important—it helps individuals analyze information, distinguish fact from fiction, and make informed decisions. Yet, this bill actively undermines critical thinking by restricting open discussion and injecting political oversight into education.

Years ago, I competed in Mock Trial as a witness and prosecutor, winning at regionals and competing at state. One lesson that still resonates with me is the danger of overly broad, vague, and overreaching legislation. When laws aren't clear, they create opportunities for abuse, selective enforcement, and unintended consequences. This bill does just that—it forces educators to self-censor out of fear of punishment, funding cuts, or political retaliation.

I know firsthand how open, thought-provoking discussions shape students. In college, an anthropology class introduced me to the !Kung tribe in Africa, challenging my assumptions. We watched a video where an Asian individual said all white people looked alike, sparking a discussion about perception and bias. And we debated how to improve education in Appalachia, tackling real-world issues with differing viewpoints. Those experiences shaped me—not because I was told what to think, but because I was challenged to think.

As a community college professor, I see many students struggle to develop social and critical thinking skills. Anxiety and uncertainty are high, and many lack confidence in discussing complex topics. If instructors worry that addressing current issues could be seen as crossing an unclear line and put their livelihood at risk, they may avoid these discussions altogether. That weakens education instead of strengthening it.

A strong education system doesn't limit discussion—it fosters it. It encourages respectful debate, helps students develop their own perspectives, and prepares them for the real world. This bill does none of that. Instead, it stifles learning, silences educators, and ultimately harms students.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject House Bill 6 / Senate Bill 1. Thank you, and I welcome any questions.