

Testimony of Martin Ponce, PhD
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
March 9, 2025

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

My name is Martin Ponce. I am an associate professor of English at The Ohio State University where I have taught for nearly 20 years. I do not represent OSU but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6 and ask that you do not support this legislation for numerous reasons:

- 1) its language on “intellectual diversity” misleadingly implies that Ohio colleges and universities are “indoctrinating” students with certain ideas and beliefs, which is the exact opposite of what is actually happening on campuses;
- 2) its ban on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs will have detrimental effects on *all* students, staff, and faculty by making campuses less welcoming and accessible spaces for everyone; it will also render students ill-prepared to live and work in a diverse and globalized world;
- 3) its requirement of making course syllabi public will create a culture of surveillance and have a chilling effect on free speech and academic freedom;
- 4) its post-tenure review provision again threatens academic freedom and will deter tenured faculty from pursuing innovative research that moves beyond the status quo;
- 5) its language on retrenchment will facilitate the possibility that academic programs could be shuttered for arbitrary political reasons;
- 6) the bill transfers the responsibility and oversight of educating Ohio’s students from educators to politicians, thus expanding the mechanisms for interference and micromanagement from external actors who are unfamiliar with conditions on the ground;
- 7) and, for all of these reasons, the bill will render Ohio a pariah state within the field of higher education and make it increasingly difficult for Ohio colleges and universities to recruit and retain free-thinking, talented, ambitious students, staff, and faculty once word of this government takeover gets out.

Respectfully, I ask that you reject this harmful bill, which could do real, irreversible damage to Ohio higher education.

Sincerely,
Martin Ponce