

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 my written testimony. My name is Susan Sipple, and I live in Cincinnati. I am a retired University of Cincinnati professor and department chair, and I am writing to you today to express my strong opposition to House Bill 6/Senate Bill 1. I do not represent UC, but rather I am presenting testimony as a private citizen.

I earned my PhD at Miami University; I was an out-of-state student who chose Miami because professors in my state recommended it for its highly-regarded English graduate programs. After I earned my PhD, I worked as a visiting professor at Miami and at Miami Hamilton before I joined University of Cincinnati where I earned tenure and the rank of professor. I know how excellent and highly regarded our public universities are. If passed into law, though, H.B.6/S.B.1 will damage the high-quality education we provide, weaken the reputations of our universities, and create problems for students who find that their Ohio public university degrees are no longer valued as they once were by graduate schools and potential employers. Additionally, H.B.6/S.B.1 would be a major hit to Ohio's economy. If it passes, our state would lose students, professors, tuition dollars, tourism dollars, and countless jobs.

H.B.6/S.B.1 will undermine the excellent education we provide by threatening academic freedom and tenure, shared governance, collective bargaining, and disciplinary experts' control of curriculum. Furthermore, the bill includes very concerning rules regarding classroom discussions of "controversial topics." When I was teaching literature, my classes always centered around discussion, the exchange of ideas, and free inquiry. However, there were times when there had to be boundaries. If I were still in the classroom, the rules about controversial topics would make it nearly impossible for me to teach my Holocaust Literature class effectively. I would be forced to allow students who believe the ideas of Holocaust deniers and conspiracy theorists to spread lies, but I would no longer have the right to refute them. In other words, dangerously ill-informed students could influence others and lead them down a path of denial and lies, and I would have to allow that to happen. With the mandate of a law, and without the protections of tenure and academic freedom, I would, for all intents and purposes, be silenced.

Perhaps you saw the news with alarm a few weeks ago, as I did, when we learned that a group of neo-Nazis had occupied a highway overpass near Lincoln Heights, Ohio, a historically Black town. Perhaps you felt your hearts drop and your anger rise when you saw the swastika flag they displayed on the fencing on that overpass. And perhaps you felt a sense of relief and pride when you heard about the Ohio drivers who stopped to confront the neo-Nazis and to tear down and burn that flag. Now, imagine an Ohio college classroom where Holocaust history or literature is being taught. Imagine that in that class is a student who believes the lies that neo-Nazis tell, and he wants to share in class that the Holocaust never happened or that the death camps didn't exist. Imagine that you are the expert in the room, but you have been forbidden by law to speak back with facts. Instead, you must let this student speak uninterrupted and let your class sort things out for themselves with no input from the expert who is standing right there. Once this student is emboldened, how many more class sessions will be derailed by antisemitism and lies? How

many other students will begin to think that historical truth is a false narrative all because lies are given a legitimate platform and the professor cannot address or correct them in that moment?

If H.B. 6/S.B.1 become law, higher education in Ohio will be irreparably damaged. Students will suffer the most, but they will suffer because their professors have lost the right to teach effectively and to be the experts that they truly are.

For all the reasons stated in this testimony, I strongly oppose House Bill 6/Senate Bill 1.

Thank you for allowing me to share my written testimony with the committee.