

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony. My name is Minna Zelch and I live in rural NE Ohio. I've worked in education for over 25 years and hold education degrees from Washington University and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. I am also a taxpayer and mother to a current Ohio public school student and an Ohio public school graduate. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

When our family moved to Ohio our children were very young, yet I was excited in part because our new state had a reputation of having top-notch public universities. This legislation will destroy that reputation. College is a time for discovery and challenging preconceptions. Censoring thought and topics that the Generally Assembly disagrees with makes an honest, free exchange of ideas virtually impossible. In addition, an important aspect of college includes interacting and working with people from different backgrounds, many of whom are attracted to DEI programs that will be prohibited if this legislation passes. Public universities exist to serve ALL Ohioans, not just those cherry picked by those in power. This legislation sends the message that anyone who is not white, male, Christian, straight, cis, born in the U.S., middle to upper class, and without a disability is NOT welcome at Ohio schools.

I've already lost one child due to bills passed by the Ohio legislature and I'm about to lose another one. My son and I visited 5 Ohio colleges last year and found three that he liked. Now that this legislation has been reintroduced, he is refusing to even consider any school in Ohio. Like his sister, he would rather go into debt that attend school here and I'm hearing the same thing from many current Ohio high school students. Can this state afford a continued brain drain of its best and brightest students?

SB 1 is censorship at best and flat out harassment at worst. Fewer students will want to come here, fewer students will want to stay here, and fewer professors will want to teach here. This legislation is an embarrassment to our state and a slap in the face of everyone involved in higher education in Ohio.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive bill.