

**Testimony of Kirsten Yates-Konzen, Assistant Professor
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025**

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

My name is Kirsten Yates-Konzen, and I have taught English for over 25 years at Cuyahoga Community College. I do not represent my institution but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. Senate Bill 1 and its companion House Bill 6 are not only oppressive; they are unnecessary. Our contract with the College requires that we tenured faculty meet our contractual obligations; if not, tenured faculty can and have been fired. Our contract already includes a no-strike clause. These policies protect students. Senate Bill 1 / House Bill 6 (hereafter referred to as simply SB 1) superfluously overlaps these policies in the name of protecting students.

However, instead of adding protections for students, SB 1 destroys the quality of their education. Deliberately vague language fails to provide clear guidelines about what can and cannot be taught. And the removal of any sort of due process for faculty means that faculty can no longer advance their curriculum and instruction with confidence. Such uncertainty clearly removes the protections of academic freedom from the classroom and delivers power to the legislature. While that power may appear to place safety measures in the hands of legislators, it will cost our state dearly in the long run.

Students will choose not to attend colleges and universities in Ohio in favor of those places of higher learning outside our state where protections afford the exploration of progressive ideas that lead to innovation. These are not vague projections. As a grandmother whose granddaughter is in her junior year of high school, considering where she will attend college, I can assure you that we as a family want her to remain here. However, for her to make the decision to remain here and for us to support that decision, SB 1 must be stopped. And my granddaughter is not alone. There are over 145,000 high school juniors enrolled in our state at this time. While some will not attend college, a good number of them will. They are considering their options right now. Will they remain here? Will any student who thought that Ohio offered among the most competitive places of higher learning in the country decide to stay here if this legislation goes through? Not likely. But you don't have to take my word for it. Ask these students. Look at their testimonies. Listen to their protests against SB 1.

I work with students every day and I listen to what they have to say about why they chose Cuyahoga Community College. They chose a school that is accessible and affordable. They chose the smaller student to faculty ratio and faculty who are dedicated to their teaching. The students want opportunities. They want the freedom to make up their own minds. SB 1 removes that freedom and places it with those far removed from the classroom in the name of protecting students from dangers that don't exist. Protections for our students are already in place via our contract with the College. The contract protects everyone—the students, the faculty, and the College. The adage “If it ain't broke, don't fix it” applies here. SB 1 is not a fix. It's a sledgehammer to higher education that will destroy opportunity in Ohio. And it will cost us all.

Please vote NO on Senate Bill 1/House Bill 6. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony today and for your consideration.