

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony. My name is Katherine Brodeur. I have worked in public education for 24 years, the majority of that time has been teaching in universities. I am strongly opposed to HB 6 and its companion bill SB 1.

Students pursue higher education to deepen their knowledge in their chosen fields but also to prepare for their future careers. However, in my experience, a truly comprehensive college education goes beyond specialization—it broadens students’ horizons, exposing them to new ideas, fostering collaborative skills, and nurturing empathy, creative thinking, and problem-solving abilities. These qualities are crucial as students graduate to become the workforce of tomorrow. As an educator, my role is not to dictate what students should think but to equip them with the tools to critically evaluate information and develop their own insights. College often marks the first time many students interact with peers from different backgrounds. This environment, both inside and outside the classroom, presents invaluable opportunities for students to exchange perspectives, challenge their assumptions, and form their own beliefs. Engaging in thoughtful discussions—especially on complex or “controversial” topics—prepares students to navigate a globalized, interconnected world. This proposed legislation threatens to strip away these essential learning experiences by imposing rigid controls on faculty autonomy and dismantling crucial diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives that foster success for all students.

Economically, the provisions of this bill will create an environment that not only jeopardizes the livelihoods of faculty but also discourages students from attending Ohio’s colleges and universities. Higher education institutions thrive on academic freedom, intellectual exchange, and diverse viewpoints, all of which are essential for fostering innovation and producing a well-rounded, skilled workforce. Many students I know have chosen to attend our institution specifically because they value the opportunity to engage in open dialogue, challenge one another’s perspectives, and participate in dynamic, inclusive communities. These are the experiences that make higher education meaningful and transformative. If this harmful bill becomes law, Ohio’s colleges will lose their competitive edge in attracting students who are seeking institutions that uphold these fundamental principles.

This bill will exacerbate the already troubling trend of declining enrollment as high school graduates, fearing a restrictive and oppressive academic environment, may choose to pursue their education out of state instead. As a result, Ohio risks not only losing a significant portion of its future talent pool but also creating a situation where students, once educated elsewhere, may not return to the state to contribute to the local economy. The long-term consequences for Ohio’s

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employers and business owners would be severe. With fewer highly educated workers entering the workforce, businesses will face a shrinking pool of qualified candidates, potentially leading to higher labor costs and reduced productivity. In turn, this could stifle the state's economic growth and innovation, limiting Ohio's ability to compete in an increasingly globalized economy. In essence, this bill threatens not only the future of higher education in Ohio but also the long-term economic health and prosperity of the state.

Each time versions of this bill have come through the legislation, it has been met with significant public opposition. This is not what the people of Ohio want for higher education. I urge you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony.