

Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 1 / House Bill 6

Submitted by: Melanie Shearer

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To: Chair Young and Members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee

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

My name is Melanie Shearer, and I am representing myself in this testimony today. I have dedicated my career to educating students—future health care workers who will serve communities across Ohio. I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1 / HB6 because I believe it will hurt our students, weaken our health care system, and diminish the quality of education that Ohioans deserve.

Health care education is more than textbooks and exams—it's about preparing students to meet the demands of real-world patient care. Our classrooms, labs, and clinical rotations are places where students learn critical skills, from addressing public health challenges to understanding the diverse needs of patients. SB 1 / HB6 threatens that mission by imposing unnecessary mandates, undermining faculty expertise, and limiting the free exchange of ideas that allows students to think critically and compassionately.

SB 1 will have a chilling effect on health care education. The bill seeks to control what topics faculty can teach and how they can address important issues like health disparities, cultural competency, and mental health awareness. These are not abstract topics—they are the daily realities health care professionals face. If faculty feel constrained by political interference, students will graduate without the ability to care for diverse patient populations effectively. This will harm the patients they serve and reduce overall health outcomes in our communities.

Additionally, SB 1 / HB 6 introduces rigid and burdensome post-tenure review policies that could drive experienced, highly qualified faculty out of Ohio. Health care programs already face critical shortages in qualified instructors, particularly in nursing. Faculty members are not easily replaced—they bring years of clinical experience, research, and mentorship that are essential to student success. If we lose these educators, we lose the very people who ensure our students are well-prepared to deliver safe and effective patient care.

Moreover, SB 1 / HB 6 weakens collective bargaining rights, making it harder for faculty to advocate for the resources students need, such as up-to-date lab equipment, simulation technology, and safe clinical placements. Faculty working conditions are student learning conditions. When faculty have the ability to negotiate for better classroom environments, smaller class sizes, and adequate resources, students benefit. Stripping away these rights will reduce the quality of education in health care programs and directly impact student success.

What SB 1 / HB 6 does not do is just as troubling as what it does. It does nothing to address the real challenges facing higher education: rising tuition, student debt, and retention problems. Instead, it diverts attention and resources away from these pressing issues, creating an environment where students and faculty are set up to fail.

In health care, failure is not an option. The stakes are too high. Patients depend on well-trained graduates who are confident, capable, and compassionate. SB 1 / HB 6 undermines the system that produces those graduates and jeopardizes the future of Ohio's health care workforce.

I urge you to reject SB 1 / HB 6 and instead work toward reforms that address the real needs of students and educators. We need policies that improve access to education, reduce barriers to success, and ensure our future health care workers are equipped to meet the challenges ahead.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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