

## OPPONENT TESTIMONY ON SB1/HB6

Testimony of Dr. Ashley Hope Pérez, PhD (Associate Professor at The Ohio State University and 2023 OSU Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award Recipient)

Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair  
March 11, 2025

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

My name is Ashley Hope Pérez, and I'm an associate professor at OSU. I do not speak on behalf of the university but rather as an educator, parent, and citizen who strongly opposes Senate Bill 1.

I've taught in public institutions since 2003, and in 2023 received OSU's highest distinction for university teaching. **I am wholly committed to public education.** Until now, I looked forward to my own sons—aged 14 and 9—attending public universities in Ohio. **But SB1 undermines every Ohioan's right to an effective and complete education.** It also endangers students' competitiveness in a rapidly changing professional landscape. It's not surprising, then, that **not a single student** attending a public university in Ohio has testified in support of this bill, and over 1,000 Ohioans have submitted testimony against it. Representatives, Ohioans have spoken loud and clear: we don't want this bill. It's not good for students. It's not good for commerce. It's not good for Ohio.

SB1 brands Ohio as a place hostile to learning, innovation, and critical thinking. **Although the bill purports to promote intellectual diversity, instead it will impose intellectual dilution and distortion.** With its vague but punitive language on the teaching of "controversial" issues, SB1 disrupts essential opportunities for students to cultivate critical thinking on any complex issue.

**Critical thinking is not a luxury but rather a vital resource for students' competitiveness in today's job market.** AI tools can do an increasing number of communication and technical tasks formerly performed by humans. This makes critical thinking capacity—which AI lacks—one of **the most essential and marketable job skills** that young people can hope to gain in college.

Faculty already encourage intellectual diversity, and we do so while ensuring that students gain essential knowledge and skills. But under SB1, instructors risk formal investigation any time they introduce students to the key debates and research in their area of expertise, no matter how carefully we proceed. That threat is chilling, and students bear the cost of it. What happens when a geology professor does not teach climate change, or is forced to emphasize views with questionable scientific value to avoid being targeted for imbalance? The outcome is a subpar education on issues that students' future employers **will** expect them to understand.

SB 1 paves the way to **an Ohio education that can only be counted on to prepare students to think superficially about elementary topics.** By undermining critical thinking skills needed to compete professionally, SB1 imperils students' job prospects. It also fundamentally devalues degrees earned in Ohio public institutions. If SB1 becomes law, we will see our brightest students turn away from public schools or head to other states for a quality public education.

**In today's economy, Ohio cannot afford the intellectual dilution, brain drain, and devaluing of degrees earned from our public universities. Please vote "no" on any form of this harmful bill.** Thank you. I welcome any questions.