

Testimony of Rachael Acheson, MA, MLIS
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Opposition to SB1/HB6
Re. Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

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

My name is Rachael Acheson. I am currently employed as an academic Reference and Instruction Librarian at the Assistant Professor rank at Bowling Green State University. I do not represent my employer but am testifying **in opposition to SB1/HB6** as a private citizen. All of the opinions I am about to express are entirely my own.

I have to be very honest that I am not sure why I am bothering to compose this testimony. The senate committee's previous hand-wave/eye-roll **dismissal of over 830 testimonies against** this very obviously and objectively (per experts among those 830+ excellent testimonies) harmful legislation has strongly suggestions to me that a number of you (though, *yes, of course*, I'm sure "not all") who hold positions of legislative power here in the state of Ohio do not care the slightest bit about the will or the wellbeing of the people you claim to represent.

Why, chair and committee, would this knowledge inspire anything other than depression, despair, and righteous fury in your constituents?

Honorable representatives of the people of the state of Ohio. You are, as your titles imply, our representation. Please do that. Please actually represent *us*. Particularly those of us who would be forced to suffer under the day-to-day fallout of the strategically vague and punitive policies outlined in SB1/HB6. And particularly the students, whose learning experiences and subsequent adult lives would be deeply stunted by their instructors' consequent inability to teach them anything. Lest teaching be arbitrarily construed, at the whim of the uneducated student, per policies explicitly outlined in SB1/HB6, as "indoctrination."

The main thing I personally have to add to this conversation is that, while I have deep familial roots in this state (I will return to this point in a moment), I am a fairly new resident in Ohio. I did not grow up near my family here, but I have wanted to reconnect with them all of my life. I moved here from Iowa in 2022. One of the main reasons I moved away from Iowa involved the passing into law of Iowa House File 802, which piece of legislation, and others subsequently, greatly resembled SB1/HB6 in both spirit and verbiage, particularly in the respect that it forbids the teaching of "divisive concepts" in state funded classrooms. And one of the reasons I felt confident selecting Ohio as a destination is that laws supporting workers rights and academic freedom here are -- or, at least, have been up to this point -- better. And I wanted to be part of the growing and strengthening of the future of a state which truly, instrumentally values the wellbeing of its people, its workers, and its communities. And values them, to be clear, moreso than it values this recent trend of capitulating to a fabricated moral panic over buzzwords like

“DEI” and “wokeness” -- which, again, I have observed that legislators like those who authored this bill seem to have difficulty even defining, let alone making any scrap of convincing argument against.

Nor am I the only one of my highly educated, qualified, and service-minded colleagues, even within my own department, who has moved to Ohio for this specific reason. Many have brought young families with them. And many are glad to be here, despite already struggling under the current economy (which, as an aside, is the *actual, real problem* that we would VERY much like you to redirect your valuable time and focus towards solving, please.).

If the state of Ohio is interested in growing its skilled workforce, reversing “brain-drain,” and capitalizing upon this moment of political and economic uncertainty to strengthen the wellbeing of *the people* of this state, then you will vote in opposition to SB1/HB6. If you vote for it, you will absolutely be driving away any of us with the capability to leave and creating prisoners of those who cannot.

And, just in case this last option is, in fact, the unspoken goal, and I wanted to add a bit more personal context. I may be new to living in the state of Ohio, but, as I already mentioned, I have extended family and, indeed, ancestral roots here. My people are a blend of Pennsylvania Dutch and Appalachian Scots-Irish. The vast majority of my immediate and extended family also happen to be generationally socioeconomically underprivileged and have only, within my own generation, begun regularly completing education beyond a high school level. I believe I am the first woman, and only the second or third person, in my entire, traceable lineage who has ever completed postgraduate level education, in any field, and the first to hold a faculty position at a university. Let alone one here in Ohio. And, whether you are fully aware of it or not, this (all of the above) makes me “diverse” and therefore a beneficiary of the DEI initiatives SB1/HB6 seeks so avidly to curtail. No, of course I, and students like I was, would not be quite as severely impacted as those more vulnerable and historically marginalized groups targeted both implicitly and explicitly by the bill’s language. But their opportunities -- the opportunities of the *vast majority of the population* of this Midwestern state -- would be severely limited, were this legislation to pass. And I can assure you that, should this legislation pass, members of my own, deeply historically-rooted Buckeye family, would look for job and educational opportunities elsewhere. As would thousands of others like them.

And I would do everything in my power to help them get out and to encourage them to do so.

Representatives, chair, committee, thank you for listening. If you even did. Please vote “no” on SB1/HB6.

Sincerely,
Rachael Acheson