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**Higher Education Committee:**

Date: March 10, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Rebecca Moates. I am a Nurse Practitioner, in healthcare 18 years. I am an Air Force Veteran alongside my husband. We have worked hard to be educated citizens and we are proud to call Ohio home. Given this, I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

I spent my childhood in an upheaval of education. I was at a Montessori, which was great. My grandmother was the director. I will say, she, despite decades of private school work, has been a staunch advocate for our public schools and education for all. I grow my roots proudly! After Montessori, I was homeschooled and then unschooled through a trajectory of parental depression. I came out of this at the doors of public high school and a renewed hope and appreciation for all the hard work educators do across the board. Through a difficult childhood into my young adult life, there are many adults I may not recall or remember as I grew older. However, if you ask for my teachers that reached out, challenged, discussed, and gave me buoyancy to eventually culminate with my masters at Georgetown University, I remember all their names and their hearts carried me.

We cannot have education in the most open and invigorating sense if we shut doors and narrow walls. When structures are tied down, there is no room for creativity of thought, there is no room for critical thinking. We will be left behind as a rural state in the midwest that shut its doors on academia. In this vein, strongly disagree with removing "controversial subjects" as this only binds and creates stress in an already strained system. We need to trust our educators. We would not be here without them.

In addition, I strongly oppose removing DEI from our education buildings and spaces. I am a fierce protector of my students and patients. While we would all love to say, racism is over, bigotry is over, etc, etc, we have not arrived yet. When I have a student tell me a local university did not feel safe for them, and they might need to move to the coast, we are not there yet. When I hear people say they are leaving the state for better options because of safety? We are not there. Removing DEI will mark us as uneducated and ignorant of national and global concern. Our priority is not tying down education but to give it space to flourish.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Rebecca M Moates

