

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 Adam Miller. I am a graduate of three different Ohio public universities (B.A., The University of Akron; M.A., Ohio University; and M.L.I.S., Kent State University). I would not be the person I am today without my experience as an undergraduate and graduate student at these universities. What I saw there, consistently, was that professors were passionate about their fields of study and committed to sharing their knowledge and wisdom with their students.

I also saw that they were struggling. When faculty unions made the decision to strike, they did not do so lightly. The last thing they wanted to do was to take time away from their vocation, teaching, to stand on a picket line. They did it because they were getting squeezed by a decades-long trend of state and federal disinvestment from the essential duty of funding higher education. I believe it is unconscionable to pass legislation to take away professors' ability to engage in collective bargaining, and I believe that this will accelerate the brain drain away from Ohio, because both students and professors will lose faith in the ability of top talent to thrive in this environment.

The proscriptions on teaching "controversial topics" and diversity, equity and inclusion policies are also, I believe, antithetical to the purpose of the university. The academy should be a place where ideas are vigorously debated and allowed to stand or fall on their own merits. It should not be a place that shies away from addressing controversial topics. Furthermore, "controversial topics" are defined so vaguely that it is impossible to determine what is safe to teach and what runs afoul of the law. Enacting these portions of the bill will also hinder the purpose of higher education, leave Ohio graduates less fully equipped to succeed in the wider world, and accelerate the departure of talented and intelligent people from our state.

I have lived in Ohio my entire life. When I was looking into colleges and graduate schools, I made the choice to stay close to home. I wanted to stay close to family and friends. I was also aware of the high cost of education so I chose to live at home and commute to The University of Akron.

Now that I am a parent myself, I am appalled that the Senate chose to ignore over 1,000 voices that spoke out against the bill, in favor of only 14 who testified in support of its passage. If this bill passes the House and goes on to be signed by Governor DeWine, then I will discourage my children from pursuing any kind of public higher education in Ohio. I will encourage them to consider a private university or an out-of-state public university that is not muzzled by irresponsible and ideologically motivated legislation.

I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

—Adam Miller