

Testimony of Ariel Esposito  
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 Ariel Esposito, and I have been a Sociology graduate student at Bowling Green State University since August 2022. I do not represent Bowling Green State University; I am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

Suppose you ask any person who chooses Sociology as their chosen field why they picked this area. In that case, you will find a group of people who celebrate the differences between people and want to fight for a specific group of people who are often ignored. We are taught and seek to teach that people are different, which should be celebrated. This bill, as written, is the antithesis of this idea.

For one thing, the bill is written so broadly that one could interpret it as shutting down any discussion of critical topics to the field of Sociology, such as the LGBTQ+ community and their existence, race, and gender. Limiting the ability to learn about these groups of people does not make them disappear. The bill seems to imply that it is increasing academic freedom. Still, the only freedom it is expanding is to push people down and pass down false information in the name of equality. The reason we learn about the impact of race or gender in academic fields is not to make white men feel shame. It is to shine a light on groups of people who have systemically been ignored. This does not make the other stories disappear. It makes the frequently ignored stories visible.

Diversity is not a weakness; it is a strength. How are we to be expected to understand each other without a template for how to do so? Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and initiatives are created to do so. If it seems that such programs are ignoring you, I implore you to see whether you need help being seen. Are you being ignored because of your race, gender identity, or sexuality? Or are you already receiving benefits that others are not privy to that you cannot see because you do not need special programs to receive them?

Having said all this, I must also include how disappointed I am in the Ohio state government, outside of my feelings about this particular bill. I have had the great opportunity to participate in student government. I have learned first-hand how essential it is to listen to my constituents and fight for what they want and believe in, even if that is not my particular belief. It is an important skill to set aside my personal beliefs and feelings to represent my constituents. I am not perfect, but compared to the Ohio Senate, I feel far more accomplished. The Ohio Senate ignored the people it seeks to represent rather than listen. This was abundantly clear when there were 15 proponents to the bill and, according to the list of witnesses on the Ohio Legislature SB1 web page, over 1,000 opponents. The Ohio Senate decided that their personal beliefs took precedence over the thoughts and beliefs of the people of the State of Ohio it purports to represent.

I implore you to right this wrong and listen to the people you represent. If the majority of people speaking up are against HB6, please do what it is you were elected to do. Represent the people. Listen to them. Accept that their choice may be different than theirs. Do what is right and vote *with* the people and not against them

I ask that you vote NO on HB6.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ariel Esposito