

**Opponent Testimony for SB1 / HB6**  
**Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee**  
**Rep. Tom Young, Chair**  
**March 9, 2025**

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Private Citizen

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

Thank you for your consideration and review of my testimony. My name is Emily Callon, and I am a current staff member and educator at the University of Cincinnati. My work as an educator informs and provides professional expertise as to how this bill would negatively impact higher education in Ohio. However, I write this testimony as a private citizen and through my personal experiences within higher education. The views that I express in this written testimony are my own as an individual and do not reflect the views of the University of Cincinnati.

I came to the University of Cincinnati as a top candidate for a position to support students co-curricular experience on campus. I was eager to work at this institution for the opportunities it gave me to explore and engage students through intellectual freedom, critical thinking, and open discourse. In the co-curricular setting, students are encouraged to engage in experiences outside of their major, their course work, and their individual college. I've seen students come together to solve cross-disciplinary problems, work together to unite toward a common goal, and provide a profound sense of leadership and engagement toward their peers. In these spaces, students are encouraged and empowered to bring together the variety of expertise, learning, and civil discourse that their curricular experiences prompt and provide those in mutual admiration and shared opportunities with one another. These are the spaces that the curricular learning is applied, nourished, and adapted to prepare students to transition beyond higher education and into careers and the workforce in Ohio. These are the spaces that this bill will restrict and remove from higher education.

These co-curricular spaces for students is not just equipping them for their futures, but engaging them around opportunities to express their opinions, learn from others, and find familiarity with like-minded individuals. And these spaces are not just providing these opportunities, but are providing essential services and resources to students, including students with disabilities, first-generation college students, veterans, and more. This bill is inherently contradictory. If the intent is to create environments for students to belong, it is outright banning and eliminating the very resources that have provided that in intent in the first place.

The impacts of this bill will be lasting. The language provided in this bill, such as the definition of "controversial belief or policy", including climate policy, electoral policies, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, and abortion, will have lasting impacts on the

ability for students to engage in critical thinking around important issues. This is a direct attack on intellectual freedom by villainizing the very essence of what higher education should be: an opportunity to engage in civil discourse.

As a person who is an educator, my goal in these co-curricular spaces is to provide for and support my students toward their goals. To be equitable in helping them reach these goals, I must provide specific resources and opportunities for my students individually. I must continue to learn and grow as an educator and adjunct faculty members. Not only does this bill impact students, but it impacts the professional growth of faculty and staff. It undermines academic freedom and discourages talented professionals coming to or staying in Ohio to further pursue this type of development.

By enacting this bill, SB1 / HB6 cuts out the core of the essence of education. It undermines and challenges and outright contradicts the intellectual freedom, critical thinking, and open discourse that higher education should encourage, support, and uphold. With it, goes resources for students and development for professionals, and the unfortunate outcome will be a loss of both in Ohio. Please consider this perspective and seek to uphold the integrity of higher education in Ohio.

Thank you,

Emily L. Callon