

Testimony of Johnathan Rush, M.A.
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 Johnathan Rush, and I am a resident of Columbus and an alumnus of The Ohio State University, where I was a graduate fellow, research assistant, and instructor for several years. I do not represent The Ohio State University or my current employer, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to House Bill 6.

I believe this bill will damage the competitiveness of higher education in Ohio. The best academic talent will be attracted to positions with less heavy-handed state control than this bill would create. Subjecting faculty to post-tenure review (Sec. 3345.453), requiring them to coddle students with politically controversial opinions regardless of their rationality (Sec. 3345.0217 (B)(4)), and forbidding bargaining on important topics such as tenure and workload (Sec. 3345.455) will all make institutions in Ohio less competitive for attracting and retaining top talent.

I came to The Ohio State University in 2007 from across the country because it had one of the best programs in the world for my field of study. After following opportunities out of state, my family moved back to Ohio last year after my spouse was offered a job at Ohio State as an assistant professor. This bill would mark the decline of our state institutions, the attractive power of our cities, and fewer stories like mine in the future. Rather than benefiting the citizens of Ohio, this bill would only benefit the institutions in other states and countries that will be attracting the top talent.

Finally, if the legislature seeks to secure intellectual diversity in higher education, it must abandon this bill's supremacy of controversial beliefs over evidence-based positions held by experts in their fields. I have taught classes at Ohio State and know that to effectively teach students, you can not attempt to indoctrinate them. This bill, however, would create a safe space for any controversial opinion to take equal footing with the expertise of our faculty. Instructors will naturally be in fear of their jobs, as the degree to which they can safely advocate for themselves and the collected evidence of their fields of study will be very much in doubt.

Please do keep in mind the speed at which subjects become politically controversial these days. A social media post from someone of influence can create controversy where there was none moments before, which could mean throwing out plans for course exams, or lectures being derailed by students empowered to lean into the latest controversies.

I urge you to oppose this bill and protect the quality of higher education in Ohio.

Respectfully,

Johnathan Rush