

D'Laveance Bert-Sims

Before the House Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

March 11, 2025

Thank you, Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee for allowing me to testify today.

My name is D'Laveance Bert-Sims, and I've lived in Ohio all of my life. It is my home. I love this state, its public institutions, and the people that keep them moving as if they were a part of me because they are integral to who I am today. Because of this, I am strongly opposed to the passage of House Bill 6.

Right now, Ohio's public colleges and universities are among the most competitive in the nation, if not the world. The Ohio State University itself has become known as a "public ivy." Due to increasingly competitive admissions requirements—looking at the student for more than just grades and test scores, but also the value they bring to their high school and wider community—Ohio State and other public colleges and universities in Ohio are harder than ever to get into.

Why is it that everyone wants to go to The Ohio State University? Besides the fact that we have a national championship football team—a compelling reason—we are here to learn. To broaden our horizons. To open our minds to new people and experiences. To build a better life for our children than our parents built for us. It is this prospect that had us students clamoring to spend over \$1 billion in tuition in fiscal year 2023.

It's a lot easier to sell that vision of prosperity when your university can be marketed as a place that's full of diverse people and experiences. People from all walks of life. People from all over this world. According to the Ohio Department of Higher Education, Ohio's public colleges and universities generate over **\$85 billion annually** for the state. When a "one-size-fits-all" approach is applied to a product where one size does not fit all, that product becomes wildly less competitive. Education is not one-size-fits-all. A quality education comes from educators and institutions that can recognize the differences of individuals, embrace those differences, and, most importantly, confront past injustices that may have left some people in our nation needing a little more help to catch up.

Furthermore, international students alone contribute more than **\$500 million** annually to Ohio's economy through tuition, living expenses, and other spending. Ohio's institutions are a major economic driver, and these students help support local businesses, foster international connections, and enhance Ohio's standing on the world stage. House Bill 6 risks Ohio's ability to attract and retain this valuable talent, which could directly harm our economic prosperity.

Ohio's prosperity is incredibly important to me, as it is my personal mission to make Ohio the greatest state in the Union. House Bill 6 walks us away from that by making Ohio higher education less competitive. College savings plans earmarked for Ohio's institutions will be redirected toward states without restrictions such as these. Ohio State will see fewer opportunities as a result of decreasing funding, further hurting enrollment numbers. House Bill 6 hurts Ohio's bottom line.

As we move forward, I urge you to consider not just the immediate implications of House Bill 6, but the long-term consequences it may have on Ohio's ability to compete in a global economy.

D'Laveance Bert-Sims

Before the House Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

March 11, 2025

By restricting diversity and limiting opportunities for students from all walks of life, we are not only undermining the values that make our institutions strong but also stunting Ohio's growth as a state.

I ask that you vote against House Bill 6 and allow Ohio's higher education system to continue thriving, supporting students of all backgrounds, and contributing to the prosperity of our state. Thank you for your time and consideration.