

March 9, 2025

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 Jennifer Knight. I am a Licensed Independent Social Worker living and working in Ohio. I earned my Master's degree in Social Work from Cleveland State University in 2014, and have worked as a mental health specialist, and as an adoption professional. I also taught in the Bachelor's of Social Work program for Indiana Wesleyan University. I am strongly opposed to SB1 and its companion bill HB6.

I have concerns about several of the provisions of this bill that will make it nearly impossible to provide future social workers with the skills and abilities that they need to practice effectively and within the professional code of ethics that governs our profession. Social work, by its nature, is focused on meeting the needs of marginalized populations, while respecting the rights and positions of the client. Students cannot learn to do that if they are prohibited from understanding who these marginalized populations are, and how they have become marginalized. A requirement that limits what universities are allowed to teach or discuss regarding issues such as risks for homelessness, factors contributing to poverty, or increased tendencies for suicidal ideation in LGBTQ populations will result in unqualified social workers joining the profession.

Furthermore, the prohibition against trainings that address the unique experiences of individual races, genders, or other special populations will restrict professional social workers from completed required continuing education and gaining current and emerging skills within the field. This will also mean that Ohio's social work programs will no longer be accredited.

Finally, the allowance of a post-tenure review at any time and for any cause will constrain faculty members from truly challenging their students to explore difficult and complex topics for fear of crossing an arbitrary line. This will also result in an overall reduction in the quality and skills of social workers in the field over time, and a deterioration of the profession.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Knight