

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

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

Please accept this testimony in opposition to SB1/HB6. My name is Stefan Fiol and I have served as Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of Cincinnati for the past 15 years. This testimony does not represent the University of Cincinnati, but rather my own views as a private citizen. I have enjoyed working with incredibly intelligent and passionate students and faculty who have come from all areas of the country and the world; yet recruitment of these faculty and students is currently imperiled by SB 1 and HB6, the “Higher Education Destruction Act.” These bills are the epitome of big government overreach, and would impose unprecedented levels of political interference and unnecessary micromanagement on Ohio's colleges and universities. If passed, this bill will be a threat to workforce development, making Ohio less competitive in attracting top-level faculty, students and staff to our universities. This is why the bill faced strong bipartisan legislative opposition in the last session and failed to advance. This is not a partisan issue.

As a university educator, I strongly believe that this bill would severely undermine the integrity of our higher education system, curtailing critical thinking. SB 1/ HB 6 contain a series of contradictions that claim to promote “intellectual diversity” while simultaneously attempting to legislate the manner in which certain topics can be addressed and the way in which professors manage their classrooms. I already demand intellectual diversity in my classroom, and it is vital that students and faculty not be prohibited from discussing certain topics. If a student feels “uncomfortable” because of a perceived “moral burden,” it is all the more important to process these feelings and listen to a range of perspectives from wide variety of peers. Students need to understand that as individuals, they are not personally responsible for systemic inequities, even though individual change and accountability are vital if we want to collectively heal and create safety for *everyone* living in Ohio and in the United States. The proscriptions laid out in this bill—effectively silencing all conversations about difference—would have a chilling effect on academic freedom and would make it more difficult for Ohio's colleges and universities to attract and retain students and faculty. Ohio cannot afford this kind of brain drain.

SB 1/ HB 6 contain at least 25 different issues areas, which would create an unprecedented number of unworkable mandates, most of which are simply more burdensome versions of what our colleges and universities already do. Giving administrators, faculty, and the chancellor more unfunded busywork takes away from student learning and adds to bureaucratic costs. None of this advances higher education. The bill also attacks workers' rights by attempting to prohibit fundamental collective bargaining subjects and the right to strike. These provisions are a thinly veiled attempt to weaken the voices of faculty, who have every right to advocate for fair working conditions, which are the students' learning conditions. Ohioans have made it clear that we support collective bargaining rights.

There are real problems in higher education that we need to address: increased tuition and debt, student retention and completion, and drastic reductions in academic programs and full-time faculty positions. SB 1/HB 6 get at none of these pressing issues and will not add value to our colleges and universities. Respectfully, I ask that you reject these bills, which, if passed, will do real, irreversible damage to Ohio higher education. Please VOTE NO ON SB 1/HB 6!

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Stefan Fiol