

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Carmen Taleghani. I am a Professor of German Linguistics at the Ohio State University. I hereby urge the committee to remove Section 3345.451 from the state budget bill. This section requires boards of trustees to have the final say on all curriculum and academic programs at Ohio's public colleges and universities. I strongly support preserving the principle of shared governance at our public universities—a system that ensures collaborative decision-making between faculty and administration. I also want to voice my deep concern about proposals that would centralize authority solely in the hands of the Board of Trustees.

Shared governance is not merely a tradition; it is a proven model that balances academic expertise with administrative oversight. Faculty members bring decades of scholarly experience, pedagogical insight, and research excellence to the table. They are directly engaged with students, curriculum development, and the evolving demands of higher education. Their involvement in governance ensures that decisions are grounded in the academic mission of the university, not just in financial or political considerations.

When faculty are excluded from governance, the quality of education suffers. We risk prioritizing short-term cost-cutting over long-term academic integrity. We risk undermining tenure and academic freedom, both of which are essential to attracting and retaining high-quality educators and researchers. And we risk turning our universities into bureaucratic institutions driven more by external interests than by the pursuit of knowledge and service to the public.

The Board of Trustees plays a vital role in oversight and fiduciary responsibility. However, concentrating all authority in the Board without meaningful input from faculty disrupts the balance necessary for thoughtful, inclusive, and effective leadership. It also undermines the democratic values that public institutions are meant to embody. Decision-making should not be top-down, but rather collaborative—reflecting the voices of those who teach, research, and engage with students daily.

Shared governance is not about resistance to change—it is about ensuring that change is thoughtful, evidence-based, and aligned with the core mission of public higher education. Faculty and administrators must work together, not in opposition, to address the challenges universities face today—from budget constraints to technological transformation and changing student needs.

In conclusion, weakening or eliminating shared governance risks eroding the quality, credibility, and public trust in our institutions of higher learning. We must uphold a system that values collaboration, accountability, and expertise. I ask you to consider my testimony and remove Section 3345.451 from the state budget bill.

Thank you.