

Testimony Jason Mullin, M.F.A., Assistant Professor of English
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
7 February, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Jason Mullin, and I am a professor of English at Cuyahoga Community College. I do not represent Cuyahoga Community College, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I am gravely concerned about the long-term consequences of Ohio Senate Bill 1 and Ohio House Bill 6. These bills threaten to undermine the core mission of higher education in Ohio—critical thinking, academic freedom, and robust student preparation for the complexities of the 21st century. While these proposals would directly harm faculty, eroding tenure protections and compromising academic independence, the most devastating impact will be on Ohio’s students and the future of our state.

This legislation is built upon fundamental misconceptions and misinformation about higher education. The bills propose solutions to problems that do not exist, while creating new, wholly political problems that will drive students and faculty away from Ohio’s institutions. Under the guise of fostering intellectual diversity and accountability, Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6 instead impose rigid ideological constraints, administrative burdens, and funding threats that will stifle meaningful education and research.

The Harm to Students

The heart of these bills lies in their attack on the ability of educators to engage students in the kind of rigorous, nuanced discourse that prepares them for the real world. By imposing restrictive definitions of “intellectual diversity,” these bills will create an environment in which educators are forced to second-guess their own teaching, lest they be accused of “indoctrination.” The reality is that higher education is already a space for diverse perspectives, debate, and inquiry. These bills seek not to expand that diversity but to police it—dictating how educators approach controversial subjects and chilling the kind of open discussion that is vital to critical thinking.

Additionally, the elimination of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs will not only harm students from underrepresented backgrounds but also make Ohio’s workforce less competitive. Employers today seek graduates who can navigate complex social and professional landscapes, yet these bills would strip away the very programs that prepare students for such challenges. In an era when companies prioritize diversity and global competency, Ohio’s institutions will fall behind, leaving our students less prepared and forcing them to seek educational and career opportunities elsewhere.

The Assault on Academic Freedom and Faculty

These bills fundamentally erode the principles of academic freedom and shared governance that are essential to a thriving intellectual community. The mandated post-tenure review process, tied to

punitive measures, threatens to make tenure meaningless—turning faculty into easily disposable employees, rather than scholars engaged in long-term, meaningful contributions to their fields. Furthermore, the restrictions on collective bargaining and the outright prohibition of faculty strikes constitute a direct attack on the ability of educators to advocate for themselves and their students.

By imposing centralized control over curriculum, mandating ideological constraints on teaching, and adding layers of bureaucracy, these bills seek to transform Ohio's higher education system into a state-controlled apparatus of political conformity. Such measures will drive talented educators away, making it harder for Ohio institutions to attract and retain the best faculty.

A Political, Not Educational, Agenda

Ultimately, Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6 are not about improving higher education in Ohio. They are about control—silencing faculty, limiting student access to comprehensive education, and weaponizing funding as a means of enforcing ideological compliance. These bills do not solve real problems but instead create an educational landscape where fear replaces free inquiry and political litmus tests dictate what can and cannot be taught.

If passed, these bills will not strengthen Ohio's higher education system—they will dismantle it. Students will leave for states that allow them the freedom to think critically. Faculty will seek institutions that respect their expertise. Businesses will struggle to find graduates equipped with the skills they need. And Ohio will be left behind.

I urge this committee to reject Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6. The future of higher education in Ohio—and the future of our students—depends on it.

Sincerely,
Jason Mullin, M.F.A.
Professor of English
Cuyahoga Community College