

Testimony of Mimi Plevin-Foust Regarding SB1 Higher Education Committee

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee: Thank you for reading my testimony today.

My name is Mimi Plevin-Foust. My husband has taught at Lakeland Community College for over 20 years, and my Airbnb business often serves families of students at Case Western Reserve University and other nearby colleges. Our family and countless others will be harmed by Senate Bill 1. I strongly oppose it and its companion bill HB 6.

When my daughter and I went looking at colleges when she was a high school senior, I was amazed by the number of excellent private and public colleges and universities in Ohio within a couple of hours' drive from our home. These schools generate billions of dollars for our state – whether from out-of-state tuitions, research dollars, state sports teams, alumni contributions, and the thousands of businesses that provide services to the schools, their staffs, students and families, of which my Airbnb business is just one small example.

Ohio colleges and universities also compete for an ever-smaller pool of students to attend them, especially since the pandemic, a problem my husband has seen as Lakeland Community College's enrollment has dropped.

I am deeply concerned that the multi-pronged, deeply unpopular, unnecessary, and unwanted changes that SB1 would impose on Ohio schools and teachers will totally undermine their ability to attract and retain students and professors, administrators, lecturers and staff. In fact, I wonder if this bill was secretly drafted by the higher education associations of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana and Illinois because their colleges are the only ones that will benefit if SB1 is passed and we see Ohio students, top professors and research grants stream out of Ohio to teach and learn in neighboring states where academic freedom is still respected.

SB1's effect on the thousands of businesses and countless small towns that serve and depend on Ohio's colleges and universities will also be catastrophic because they will have fewer and fewer people to serve: It is likely that many Ohio colleges will have to close as students with means choose to study elsewhere.

The fact that your colleagues have reintroduced different versions of this unneeded, unwanted higher education bill year after year despite thousands of testimonies and protesters against it and almost no one testifying for it, shows a disturbing level of contempt for the Ohioans you are supposed to serve.

Please consider my testimony and vote 'No' on SB1. Don't sabotage Ohio's higher education industry with this extremist bill which undermines decades of hard-fought social progress in our country and will harm countless businesses, students, universities, and families like mine. Thank you.