

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Emily Romano. I am a university student in northeast Ohio. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

These bills threaten the integrity of higher education by undermining academic freedom, diversity, and the ability of institutions to govern themselves. As a student, I have personally benefited from an education that encourages open dialogue, critical thinking, and exposure to diverse perspectives. SB 1 and HB 6 would impose unnecessary state control over university curricula, restrict discussions on race, gender, and systemic inequities, and hinder students' ability to engage with complex social issues. These changes would not only limit my education but also make Ohio's universities less competitive in attracting students and faculty.

Additionally, as someone studying fashion design and art history, I have seen firsthand how diverse ideas and perspectives fuel creativity and innovation. The arts, humanities, and social sciences thrive on critical discourse and debate. By attempting to regulate what can and cannot be taught, these bills jeopardize the ability of students like me to engage in meaningful academic exploration. Research shows that states with restrictive educational policies often experience faculty departures and declining enrollment, which could have long-term consequences for Ohio's economy and workforce development.

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

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.