

To the Ohio Higher Education Committee,

I am writing this testimony to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6. As a student, an advocate, and a believer in the rights and freedoms for all, I am extremely concerned with how detrimental this bill would be on our higher education institutions.

Higher education is supposed to be a place where students are able to focus on their studies, gain experience, and prepare for the workforce. These bills would provide unnecessary distractions that will hinder students' ability to succeed. The goal of higher education is to ensure that students graduate with a degree and are prepared to enter the workforce. By implementing policies that interfere with students' abilities to succeed academically, these bills risk the increase in dropout rates and incomplete degrees.

Many students already have to balance academic pressure with personal and financial challenges. Forcing students to contend with additional restrictions and stressors caused by these bills would make it harder for students to stay enrolled in college and progress through their degree programs. Lower graduation rates would result in fewer qualified individuals entering the Ohio workforce, hindering the economic growth of the state.

While Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6 do not directly address healthcare, it is integral to acknowledge the emotional and psychological impact that such policies would have on students. Ohio college students already face significant mental health challenges not limited to stress, anxiety, and depression, and these bills could increase these challenges through feelings of uncertainty and feelings of powerlessness. This would further impact academic performance and degree completion as well as emotional well-being and overall health.

Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6 directly undermine the environments Ohio colleges have built that support students of all backgrounds. Restrictions on open dialogue, critical thinking, and diverse perspectives put students at a disadvantage and lowers the worth of their education. These bills affect the ability of educators to engage students in meaningful discussions about social issues, stifling the exchange of ideas essential to student development and higher education. By restricting how educators can approach topics deemed "controversial," such as race, gender, identity, and history, students are unable to grow, be empathetic, intellectually grow, and be understanding.

Additionally, a core tenet of higher education is freedom for both students and educators to explore ideas, develop their own perspectives, and challenge assumptions. These bills restrict this freedom by imposing limitations on what students can learn and what educators can teach. These bills directly interfere with personal autonomy as they prevent students from making their own informed decisions through topics engaged with academically. Education should empower students to think critically, develop personal viewpoints, and explore ideas freely. These bills take away a student's right to engage with a wide range of perspectives and ideas, explicitly imposing restrictions on intellectual freedom, which is the foundation of a meaningful education.

These bills may also demonstrate that Ohio is not a state that supports its students in pursuits of education and personal development. With this message, Ohio's college and universities

reputations would be negatively impacted, discouraging prospective students from coming to Ohio for higher education. The impact of Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6 goes beyond the classroom. These bills threaten to create an environment where those in Ohio's colleges are fearful of expressing themselves. A result of these bills includes Ohio's students graduating without the full range of ideas needed to succeed in the diverse and interconnected world we live in, creating division rather than a world of respect. We should be preparing students to navigate our complex and changing society which requires fostering open-mindedness and critical thinking through higher education.

In conclusion, I urge you to vote against Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6. These bills propose harm to Ohio's students, lower college completion rates, and damage the state's high education system. We must support policies that cater to academic achievement and ensure that Ohio's students have the resources, opportunities, and experiences necessary to succeed.

Passing these bills would be a step backward for Ohio's educational future.

Sincerely,

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