

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 Evan Riley. I am a 57-year-old resident of Wooster.

I am very strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

These bills are an attack on academic freedom, the protection of which is (or has been) one of the key strengths of US higher education for decades. They contain a deep incoherence—allow me to elaborate.

The bills' language suggests that anything that is the subject of "political controversy" is to be always treated as a serious matter of debate between rival views of more-or-less equal merit. But in the same breath, the bill attempts to ban inclusiveness, equity, and diversity training or teaching. This is incoherent. First, insisting as the bills do, that multiple perspectives on controversial matters be always scrupulously respected, is itself a demand for **equity and diversity**. Second though, one cannot properly criticize a view like so-called "wokeness" without giving it a hearing. But the bills would require the institutions to over-police this kind of thing, which will, predictably, lead directly to a fearful and dishonest learning environment. In short, it will have a silencing effect, not a freeing of speech and inquiry. That's a bad thing, even by the bills' own standards.

Further, if you wanted to weaken and undermine the state institutions of higher education in the state of Ohio, and thereby harm the local and regional economy, this bill will do that. For it will clearly have the effect of dissuading many potential students and academics from around the world from choosing to enroll or work in Ohio institutions of higher education. Given the demographics pertaining to the education sector, that's obviously something to avoid.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this incoherent, unnecessary, and confused bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Evan Riley