

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony in opposition to SB 1/HB 6. My name is Deidre Hazelbaker and I am an engaged community member, a dedicated advocate for education, and a firm believer in the value of free and open learning.

SB 1 and HB 6 would have a devastating impact on Ohio's public colleges and universities. If passed, this legislation would drive students, professors, and tuition dollars out of our state— weakening our institutions, our workforce, and our economy. Businesses rely on a well-educated talent pool, and a strong higher education system is key to keeping Ohio competitive. Instead of strengthening our universities, this bill places unnecessary restrictions that will make it harder to recruit and retain top educators and students.

Among the most alarming provisions in this bill are:

1. **Public disclosure of educators' names and contact information** under the guise of "transparency." This opens the door to harassment and threats, putting educators at risk and discouraging top talent from teaching in Ohio.
2. **Restrictions on curriculum deemed "politically controversial."** The vague and arbitrary limitations on essential topics—such as history, political science, environmental science, and medicine—undermine academic integrity and weaken our institutions' ability to prepare students for the real world.
3. **The elimination of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and training.** While DEI is often framed as being about race, it is much broader—it ensures that all students, including veterans, students with disabilities, first-generation college students, and those from rural communities, have access to opportunities and resources to succeed. Strong DEI initiatives help ensure that every student—no matter their background—can contribute to Ohio's economy and workforce. Businesses and employers value DEI efforts because they help build stronger teams, attract top talent, and foster innovation. Eliminating these programs sends the wrong message about Ohio's commitment to being a place where all students can thrive and contribute to our state's future.

Ohio's future depends on strong, competitive public universities that attract talent, fuel innovation, and prepare the next generation of leaders. SB 1 and HB 6 do the opposite. I urge you to vote NO on this harmful legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Deidre Hazelbaker