

*Testimony from Karen Lewis, Associate Professor at Ohio State University*

February 10, 2025

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 Karen Lewis. I am proud to be a professor at The Ohio State University for the past 15 years. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6, and I'd like to share my experience with you today.

I was recruited to Ohio State for my innovative information design research, entrepreneurial work with local businesses, and national teaching recognition. After my recruiters left for other institutions, I faced resistance from colleagues who opposed my unconventional ideas. Despite facing hostility - including a colleague who refused to share an elevator with me and later voted for my termination simply because he disagreed with my work - I persevered because I believed in Ohio State and Columbus.

After earning tenure, my research flourished. I secured significant funding through projects like redesigning Bob Evans restaurants. My work expanded to include research on Ohio's Underground Railroad, which I presented at Stanford University and implemented at Westerville's Sycamore Trail Underground Railroad Park. Tenure enabled this innovation and creativity.

Additionally, tenure doesn't just give us academic freedom — it gives us the freedom to put down roots in Ohio. It gave me the security to marry, buy a home in Upper Arlington, become a stepmom, and join my church choir. Tenure gives us the freedom to contribute fully to Ohio.

I urge you to vote NO on this bill. Eliminating tenure would devastate our ability to recruit and retain top faculty, secure research funding, and attract exceptional students. Ohio's universities would become significantly less competitive nationally.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.