

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 Kirsten Parkinson. I am a professor at a small college here in Ohio. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6 because it represents an unacceptable overreach into higher education.

SB 1 and HB 6 will undermine academic freedom and faculty governance and destroy the ability of Ohio's higher education institutions to prepare students for a globalized world. This bill places arbitrary restrictions on faculty hiring, limits tenure protections, and forces a distorted definition of intellectual diversity that could hinder evidence-based teaching. It seeks to micromanage course syllabi, monitor faculty for ideological conformity, and eliminate vital diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives that create more accessible and equitable learning environments.

I teach courses on world literature, gender, and film that challenge my students and encourage them to see the world and their place in it from new and broader perspectives. They leave my classroom better prepared to work with a wider array of people and to think more creatively about the problems and issues that they will encounter in the workplace. If their curriculum and the faculty that they can learn from is restricted by a narrow idea of appropriate ideologies, then they will be mentally shackled from being their best selves. Ohio's workforce and businesses will suffer as a result.

Most troublingly, SB 1 and HB 6 threaten institutional funding based on vague ideological metrics. By dictating how and what we teach, this bill weakens Ohio's ability to attract top-tier educators and students. The success of Ohio's higher education system depends on intellectual freedom, not political mandates. I urge you to oppose this bill in the interest of our students, our institutions, and the future of Ohio's workforce.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Parkinson