

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Debra Gatton. I am an adjunct professor for two Ohio institutions of higher learning, a former full-time professor, and a mother of a 15-year-old public school student. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

As an adjunct professor, a citizen of Ohio, and a mother, I am deeply concerned about the implications of the proposed bill. This bill, if passed, would have far-reaching negative consequences for both faculty and students.

First and foremost, the ban on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives is particularly troubling. DEI programs play a crucial role in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their background. By prohibiting these initiatives, we risk alienating and marginalizing students who already face significant challenges in higher education. This move would undermine the progress we have made in efforts to address systemic inequalities and promote diversity and inclusion on our campuses. As a professor, I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact of DEI programs on student engagement and success.

Furthermore, the prohibition on higher education institutions taking positions on controversial beliefs or policies is a dangerous precedent. Universities and colleges should be places where diverse ideas and perspectives are encouraged and debated. By restricting the ability of institutions to engage in these important discussions, we stifle academic freedom and limit the intellectual growth of our students.

In conclusion, this bill poses significant threats to the quality and inclusivity of higher education in our state. I urge lawmakers to reconsider these provisions and work towards policies that support and enhance our educational institutions, rather than undermine them.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Debra S. Gatton, Ph.D.