

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 Kathy Swensen. I am a retired middle school teacher, guidance counselor, and clinical counselor. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

Children first arrive at school from many backgrounds and experiences and we as teachers start where each child is and help them learn and grow from there. Some of our students come from homes with caregivers who have taught them to value differences and to recognize that we are all worthy of love and respect. Others are not so fortunate. As they mature, their world views will expand depending upon what they are taught.

I will never forget taking a group of 8<sup>th</sup> graders from my rural school district to Sinclair Community College for a field trip. I was aghast to hear one of my students refer to a group of African American adults waiting at a city bus stop as a “bunch of niggers.” When I called her out, she put her hand over her mouth, and said, “Sorry, I can’t help it. It’s how we talk at home.” How did this girl make it to 8<sup>th</sup> grade without knowing better?

I thought of that incident on Friday morning when I read the news report that 25 year old Marko Elez of Elon Musk’s DOGE team had resigned when offensive racist posts he’d made on social media were uncovered. Sadly, racism, sexism, and xenophobia are deeply ingrained in our country’s DNA, so deeply that this talented young man graduated from college with these offensive beliefs still intact.

We cannot refuse to teach facts and truths because they may not be comfortable! Nor can we pretend that “everyone’s opinion is equal” when those beliefs and opinions lead to the continued mistreatment and discrimination of others. We can be honest and brave and respectful. That is how we change, grow, and, over time, improve our world.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this well-intentioned but harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my testimony.

Kathy Swensen