

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

My name is Leann Schneider Webb. I am a small business owner, former public librarian, and proud graduate of Kent State University, one of Ohio's many public universities. I was born in Akron and now live in Columbus. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

SB1 and HB6 will negatively impact Ohio's economy and its citizens for decades to come, and that's why I oppose the bills. I received both an undergraduate degree (BA) and two graduate degrees (MA, MLIS) from Kent State University at an affordable cost. The education I received there set me up to succeed in my career and be competitive in my fields *because* the university was free to operate without micromanaging oversight of The State.

Universities should be led by educators and scholars, not politicians. This bill gives the state too much power over what is taught in classrooms. While at KSU I learned about colonization and capitalism; I took classes on human anthropology and learned that gender is a cultural construct, not a scientific one; I read the Iliad, the Odyssey, The Wizard of Oz. I ate lunch where 4 students were shot and killed by the Ohio Army National Guard on May 4th, 1970 during a Vietnam War protest. I made friends with people of all backgrounds. My professors were free to teach and challenge and bore without the yoke of censorship around their necks.

My empathy expanded, along with my worldview. An experience like mine should be celebrated, not feared.

Higher education is one of the first targets of authoritarian regimes because they are sites of critique and dissent. Academic freedom is critical to a healthy democracy.

It terrifies me that here in Ohio, Republicans are willing to let our gold-standard universities devolve into a circus. ALL Ohioans will suffer if our universities can no longer attract top talent because they aren't seen as serious institutions. As someone born in Northeast Ohio—with a family from Appalachia—I'm too familiar with brain-drain. DEI policies help faculty and students feel safe. Faculty unions protect professors. If universities cannot attract or keep top talent because students don't feel safe and faculty are censored...these hearts of our community will die.

A Hail Mary: OSU football needs a university behind it to function. OSU is one of the best research institutions but Michigan's academics are already better, this is a known truth. Michigan has beat Ohio *four times* in a row. OSU might be national champs in football but the nation is laughing at us for these shortsighted bills. If the state meddles with an institution like OSU, it *will* lose money, its football program will suffer. It will not be able to attract top talent.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful, extremist, discriminatory, destructive, and ultimately very stupid bill.