

Kirsten Yates-Konzen

Re: Senate Higher Education Committee
Senate Bill 1 – Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act

February 8, 2025

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding Senate Bill 6, the Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act. My name is Kirsten Yates-Konzen. I teach English at Cuyahoga Community College, Western Campus in Parma. I am writing this testimony for one reason: I care about my students. I help my students to read, to research, and to write about what they find. And in that process my students become people who can read more than textbooks. They can read their surroundings. And here's what they will soon see: a plan that holds them back from becoming free-thinking, contributing members of the community. How will Senate Bill 1 hold them back? By creating fear and uncertainty about what can and cannot be taught. The students won't trust their teachers; the teachers will fear reprisal by their students or parents. And then partisan political leaders will swoop in to lock down what can and cannot be taught. Partisan political leadership should have no place writing curriculum in our public schools and in institutions of higher learning. If we take that plan to its conclusion we see the erosion of trust in our community—members who are afraid to participate, who are afraid to contribute. And that spells the end of the community altogether.

But that hasn't happened yet. Today, my students work multiple jobs while going to school. My students are raising families while going to school. They're just trying to make themselves better so the lives of their kids will be better here in Ohio. They believe in education and trust their teachers to help them *learn*. Real learning, by definition, is not limited by subject. It is the freedom to explore. So, I'm writing here on behalf of these deserving people. I will continue to teach them how to read, how to research, how to write. And do you know what? They will see the possibilities and give everything they have to this place they call home. Here's your chance to do the right thing: Vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

Thank you, Senator Roegner, and members of the committee for your consideration.