

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 Katie Rapson-Stecula. I am a resident of Franklin County; I live with my husband, who is a professor at The Ohio State University, and my 15 month old son, in Columbus. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

My husband has dedicated his adult life to studying, researching, and teaching about ways polarization in the media have had negative impacts on our democracy. His work includes various examples of how this has been disastrous along with a number of ways we, as Americans, can work towards common ground to have civil discourse and come to compromising solutions to ensure a safer, more productive, and more representative country. Contrary to what some might assume of him and his work, he is not an ideologue wanting to indoctrinate students or push his "leftist" agenda. Somewhat ironically, he is often berated on the left for his research findings. Any look into his published peer review papers, appearances in the media, and syllabi for his students will highlight his rigorous practice of impartiality and encouragement of critical thinking.

Aspects of this bill would essentially work to ensure that, should he continue to research or teach about how things like climate change and vaccines have become politicized by the left and the right, and the implications this can have on the country, he would likely be silenced or fired for doing so. What kind of education would students be receiving if the encouragement of critical thinking about very real problems our country faces, such as continued polarization, are silenced? Is the intention of this bill really to ensure that students are not taught about topics that might have some political controversy? Is the assumption that said university students have zero ability to come to logical conclusions on their own?

As a parent who wants their child to grow up in a country where critical thinking is encouraged, as a spouse who wants her husband to continue to have a positive impact with his profession, and as a citizen of this state who wants to ensure that higher education is not micromanaged by those who have obvious political agendas, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful, extremist, discriminatory, and destructive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.