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February 9, 2025

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 Jennifer Carroll. I am a lifelong Ohioan, small business owner, and parent of two children who have earned their university degrees. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

First, a major reason I strongly oppose this bill is its clear attempt to strip away workers' rights—rights that have helped build and sustain Ohio's middle class throughout my lifetime. My mother served as a nurse for over 40 years, and it was her union's efforts that secured her a pension that now allows her to live with dignity in retirement. Without those union protections, she would be left with nothing but social security. My uncle, who led his local teachers' union in the 1960s and 1970s, showed me how organized labor not only protected workers but also advanced educational excellence. Their experiences have proven to me that strong worker protections and quality education are inseparable. This bill's attack on workers' rights in higher education is a direct threat to both our educators and the quality of education they provide.

Second, this bill, while cloaked in language about "controversial" subjects and diversity programs, represents dangerous government overreach into our higher education system. Having spent decades of my life in religious fundamentalism and later rejecting its authoritarian aspects, I have a unique perspective on the importance of intellectual freedom. While I personally oppose fundamentalist worldviews, I firmly believe in protecting everyone's right to explore and choose their own beliefs—as long as they don't restrict others from doing the same. The government should not be in the position of determining what subjects are "controversial" or limiting academic discourse. This kind of restriction is precisely what this bill attempts to do. Universities must remain places where ideas can be freely explored and debated.

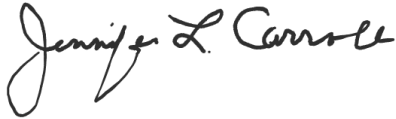
Finally, this bill would threaten vital scholarship programs that make higher education accessible to Ohio families. My own daughter recently benefited from scholarships that were crucial to her ability to complete her degree. By potentially eliminating these opportunities, SB 1 would place an even greater financial burden on average Ohio families like mine.

As a small business owner, I understand the importance of having an educated, diverse workforce that can think critically and engage with different perspectives. This bill would diminish our universities' ability to prepare students for success in world which I fervently hope will remain interconnected.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill that would damage both our education system and workers' rights. The government's role should be to support and strengthen our universities, not to restrict academic freedom or weaken worker protections.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer L. Carroll". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer L. Carroll  
Small Business Owner  
Canton, Ohio