

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 Shannon O'Connor. I am an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Toledo. I am writing today as a concerned Ohioan, and I want to clarify that my views are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of my employer. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

Last summer, I was honored to receive an offer to join the faculty at the University of Toledo. As a Midwest native, I was eager to relocate to Ohio and contribute my teaching and scholarship to one of the state's esteemed institutions. However, after recently navigating the academic job market, I am deeply concerned that significant government oversight, the potential for faculty intimidation, and the constraints on our ability to teach and mentor within our discipline could undermine the recruitment of top-tier faculty and lead to the exodus of well-established, well-funded scholars from Ohio's universities. This could result in a loss of prestige for these institutions, which would likely contribute to further declines in student enrollment. Higher education in Ohio is already facing instability, with enrollment numbers on the decline, and the departure of distinguished faculty—along with the funding they attract—would only exacerbate these challenges. Without strong faculty and the resources they bring, Ohio's universities risk further disarray, and students may increasingly look elsewhere for their education.

I will now address the issue more specifically within the context of my discipline, Psychology. As a clinical psychologist affiliated with a doctoral program accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA), I must emphasize that one of the fundamental requirements for APA accreditation is that institutions provide clear evidence of "actions that indicate respect for and understanding of cultural differences and individual diversity." The APA mandates that accredited psychology programs integrate diversity and cultural competency into their curriculum, faculty composition, student body, and field placements. This includes preparing students to effectively engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds, considering factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and ability levels. These expectations are not merely guidelines—they are foundational standards for accreditation.

The inability or fear of addressing diversity issues would place Ohio universities in direct conflict with the core values of our field. Psychology is one of the most popular majors at universities throughout Ohio, with significant enrollment across institutions: Ohio State University (Psychology ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most popular major, 4.4% of graduates), University of Cincinnati (ranked #4, 4.2% of graduates), Kent State University (ranked #5, 8% of graduates), Ohio University (ranked #2, 2.7% of graduates), Miami University (ranked #6, 6% of graduates), Bowling Green State University (ranked #2, 4% of graduates), University of Toledo (ranked #8, 3% of graduates), Cleveland State University (ranked #2, 8.9% of graduates), University of Dayton (ranked #6, 5% of graduates), and Youngstown State University (ranked #5, 4.7% of graduates).

If faculty are unable to teach and mentor within the established standards of our discipline without fear of retribution, the quality of education and training will suffer. This will inevitably diminish the reputation of psychology programs across Ohio. As psychology continues to be one

of the most consistently popular majors, any decline in the quality of education will push prospective students to seek opportunities elsewhere.

I urge you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Shannon O'Connor, PhD