

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today. My name is William J. Meltzer. I am now retired, but hold a Ph.D. and have taught in state universities in three different states; I have decades of experience in academic life.

I am strongly opposed to S.B. 1 and its companion bill H.B. 6.

My main objection to the proposed bill is its threat to academic freedom—the principle that research, teaching, and the pursuit of knowledge must take place without political or ideological restraint. For science to advance, new ideas and questions need to be explored openly and honestly, and this cannot happen when government decides what may and may not be studied. When political agendas interfere with academic life, scholarship is degraded, deformed, and crippled.

Tenure, while imperfect, has proven to be the best way to protect faculty from potential political or religious pressure. Researchers and teachers must not be afraid of losing their positions or funding if they question, examine, or discuss something controversial. It is good for science and knowledge—for society—when academics are free to hold and espouse a variety of views, even if the views are unpopular or controversial.

One thinks of Galileo being condemned by the Catholic Church for the heresy of observing that the earth moves around the sun.

Academic freedom has practical advantages as well: a major study (reported in 2023) found that academic freedom correlated with both the quantity and quality of patents filed in some 157 countries—clearly a boon to economic growth.

To sum up: as institutions dedicated to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, universities rightly value free and vigorous discussion of all topics, including those that may raise uncomfortable matters. Such freedom is essential for the advancement of science and knowledge. A government that restricts this liberty condemns its higher education to being second-rate, thereby harming its students, its faculty, and its ability to attract superior staff and students. Ohio deserves better.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on damaging and counterproductive S.B.1.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony.