

February 9, 2025

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

Thank you for reading my testimony. My name is Jessica McLaughlin and I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6. I am an associate professor of psychology at Cuyahoga Community College and that work is my life's passion. But today I write to you as a mother. I grew up in Ohio but took my first teaching job out-of-state. When my son was born, I knew I wanted to be closer to home, to family, to my roots. I knew I would be able to raise my child in Ohio with the values I uphold to be the most important – integrity, honesty, compassion, and empathy.

Fast forward and today I am the lucky mother of a 9-year-old gifted child who craves to learn and plan his future. His dream is to go to his mom's college as soon as he is old enough, as early as high school. I used to love these conversations but now my heart breaks trying to answer his questions as he dreams his dreams of growing up. I don't know how to tell him that, if SB 1 passes, the quality of education in the state of Ohio will have degraded so much that he likely won't want to attend college in state. He won't have an education well rounded enough, at a high enough caliber to be competitive in the job market. I don't know how to tell him that our house – the home that was supposed to his parents' forever home – might not be his home much longer because I will no longer be able to teach my classes with the level of academic integrity necessary for me to feel like I am serving my students. If SB 1 does pass, I will have to compromise my teaching values, values that I promised I would instill in my own child.

My child will have to sit in classes and have his time learning wasted as teachers are forced to abandon academic integrity and standards mandated by their fields of expertise in favor of accepting all students' opinions as fact, and in an impossible attempt to avoid "controversial" topics (a nebulous concept at best, given that almost all topics are controversial to some degree). If SB 1 passes, my child will have to attend schools that have abandoned diversity, equity, and inclusion, which includes the loss of much needed resources devoted to mental health, to our veterans, to our first generation students, to people with disabilities, to ADA compliance. All of this creates unnecessary barriers to student success.

SB 1 is a fundamental attack on helping students thrive by treating others with compassion and empathy, it is an attack on creating learning spaces rooted in integrity and honesty....it is an attack on all the values that I and so many other Ohioans want to instill in their children. I urge you to vote no on SB 1 so that we can keep our jobs here, so we can keep our incredible teachers here, so we can keep our students here. This bill will ultimately result in an unprecedented decline in the quality of our schools, the number of residents we have in Ohio, and our economy. I urge you to vote no so that our children can continue to dream their dreams and so that Ohio parents can continue to trust that their children will receive an education that prepares them for a successful future—right here in the state we believe in.

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

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Jessica McLaughlin