

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 Joseph Baumgartner. I am a college professor at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College but am writing this testimony as a concerned citizen. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

SB1 claims to “advance” Ohio’s higher education, but all it really does it advance partisan micromanaging of academic laborers. The bill is full of contradictions and vague language that creates a culture of fear among higher education communities. At the center of this is a contradiction between “intellectual diversity” and viewpoints compelled by the bill.

The bills define intellectual diversity as “multiple, divergent, and varied perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues (Sec. 3345.0217 (A) (1)).” And yet, just a few lines later, the bill bans all efforts relating to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). It is patently ridiculous to purport to promote varied perspectives only to ban programming for the benefit of veterans and first-generation students. The college I work at has made considerable progress in serving the veteran community in southeast Ohio, and I consider it a privilege to have servicemen in my classes. This bill would create barriers between veterans and the education they have rightfully earned.

For all its contradictions and fuzzy language, there is one thing that SB1/HB6 makes perfectly clear: this bill weakens Ohio’s academic workforce by micromanaging faculty and slashing workers’ rights. Unfunded mandates such as a post-tenure review and the syllabus database add nothing of value to the student experience while exposing instructors to bad-faith actors. Provisions that forbid striking and bargaining for fundamental aspects of academic freedom are an assault on the working class. Faculty working conditions determine the student learning environment. The changes in SB1 make that environment less appealing to students and makes Ohio’s higher education less competitive. That means less money for the state and less opportunity for its citizens.

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

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

-Joseph Baumgartner