

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 Ben Kaster. I am a business management student at Marion Technical College, and an upcoming political science student at Ohio Wesleyan University. I am also affiliated with Indivisible Central Ohio. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

As a current student myself, I am deeply saddened by the removal of student representation on school boards. I am from Delaware, and we have always had a student representative on our board. Our student representative has brought incredible insight for school policy and representation, as they are from within the walls of the school and knows best about what needs changed within the school. Removing this representative body would be disastrous to equal representation in academic decisions, just because of the factor of not having someone who feels the impact of the school's policy the most. Selecting a student representative is an arduous and thorough process, which ensures that the student can best represent the school's interest.

I would now like to speak in strong opposition of pages 21 and 24 over "controversial beliefs or policies". Representatives, I find it extremely unfortunate that common American policies are on the chopping board for public education. Giving a student education over political subjects is vital to their understanding over how the American political system truly works. Furthermore, limiting this education will only devolve our education system as a whole, as students will be ill-informed over how to interpret policies being put in place by our government officials. History, government, and other social studies teachers are vested with the responsibility of providing a non-biased teaching of American politics, and in my high school/college experience that's exactly how it was, unbiased and educated. I can guarantee this is a precedent that will remain in our public education system. Furthermore, as someone who has taken a human resources college class, I have learned the importance of DEI, as having members of different ethnicities,

backgrounds, and cultures in a workplace is vital to its success. Not only does it give more opportunity to underserved communities, it also gives the company more insight from a different population of employees. If this were to be implemented, business majors would struggle to understand the importance of having diversity in the workplace. Removing DEI in school faculty will also be disastrous, as giving students multiple different scopes of education is vital to their growth.

Finally, I would like to discuss the faculty strike ban and the fund withholding. Removing faculty striking rights is a blatant removal of the right to protest. Teachers and school faculty are some of the most honored citizens of our nation, and they deserve the right to unionize and oppose certain policies if necessary. Teachers are vital to our student's future, and they deserve to be treated fairly and equitably. Not only that, disbanding teacher and faculty's right to strike will serve as a precedent to disallow other Ohio unions to do the same. This also ties in to fund withholding, Ohio universities are some of the best in the country, and withholding funds will only decrease the quality of education that we enjoy in Ohio. Removing college funds is NOT the way to retaliate against schools who may have a differing viewpoint from government officials.

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

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, I will now take any questions you may have. If there are none, I yield my time back to the chair.