

Testimony of Professor Susan Burris
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair

February 9, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide this written testimony. My name is Susan Burris. I am a small business owner and Communications Professor at Owens Community College, specializing in technical communication. I do not represent OCC, but rather, I am submitting this testimony as a private citizen and independent voter in opposition to Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6.

Although these bills might be popular among some Republican voters, they conflict with core Republican values of limited government, fiscal responsibility, and individual freedom. I urge you to reconsider their impact on Ohio's students, educators, and economy.

These Bills Create Bigger Government

Republicans have always championed the benefits of less government interference. These bills require: compliance reports, required training, mandatory meetings, continual documentation, additional evaluations, new boards, etc. These are the definition of red tape. These bills will burden educators with administrative tasks that detract from their primary role: teaching students.

Instead of fostering efficiency, these measures will create inefficiencies that waste taxpayer dollars and reduce classroom learning time. Ohio employers already face challenges finding skilled workers in fields like manufacturing, engineering, healthcare, and education. Adding bureaucratic hurdles will only exacerbate this workforce shortage by leaving students less prepared for the demands of our economy.

These Bills Misallocate Tax Resources

Requiring universities to develop a course in American Civic Literacy is redundant and fiscally irresponsible. Ohio taxpayers already fund civic education. High school students are required to take American History and American Government. Strengthening this curriculum at the high school level is a more responsible use of resources than duplication.

Shifting this study of civics to the college level is exclusionary. Half of Ohioans never go to college. Every student should be entitled to learn about America, not just the ones who can afford college.

These Bills Undermine Free Speech and Critical Thinking

The strength of American democracy lies in its commitment to free speech and open dialogue. These bills challenge the premise of the First Amendment by restricting discussions about "climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion." Ohio's economic future depends on a well-educated workforce capable of discussing complex ideas. Restricting speech restricts innovation.

Our Founding Fathers understood that an educated citizenry is vital to self-governance. Limiting open discussion in classrooms contradicts this principle and risks creating a generation ill-equipped to tackle complex societal challenges. As Republicans who value individual liberties, we must reject policies that curtail freedom of thought and expression.

These Bills are Anti-Ownership and Intellectual Property

Requiring schools to post their course material is equivalent to giving away their product for free. Rather than pay tuition, anyone can have access to this material. It is unfair to the students who pay tuition to give this information out for free.

These Bills are Anti-Law and Order

Mandating public access to educators' contact information poses significant safety risks. Teachers already face threats ranging from verbal harassment to physical violence; exposing their personal information invites more threats. Protecting our educators is not just a moral imperative—it is essential for maintaining the safety of students and creating a productive learning environment.

Ohio deserves laws that empower students to succeed in a competitive global economy while upholding the conservative values of limited government, fiscal responsibility, and personal liberty.

Concerned citizen,
Susan Burris
Bowling Green, OH