

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 Sarah Firestone. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

There are many things in SB 1 and HB 6 that concern me, but there are a few portions that I find most concerning:

1) Controversial beliefs or policy: This handcuffs our educators when it comes to correcting a student who may misunderstand a “controversial belief or policy”. This could mean a med student may not learn health outcomes for all communities, which could cause a patient to lose their life. This also means that a controversial historical event could be denied or the student could not understand full context and the educator is not allowed to correct the student. There’s the saying “those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it”. History happened, to not be able to educate that it happened in the ways it did, even if it does not paint America, politicians, etc in a the best light is incredibly detrimental to the progress of America.

2) Degree Program Elimination: Students need to have faith that the degree program they’ve selected and been working towards will still be around when it’s time for their graduation. This language threatens that.

3) DEI Bans: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is not a bad thing. It DOES NOT mean that highly qualified white persons are overlooked for unqualified non-white persons. It does mean that highly qualified non-white persons are **not** overlooked for unqualified white persons. Anyone who claims that white privilege isn’t a thing is blind, and I say this as a white female. By removing this protection and corresponding education, you allow biases to continue to perpetuate.

4) Collective bargaining and striking rights: Educators don’t strike on a whim; they know that doing so hurts their students more than anyone else. Nor do all universities do the right thing and pay their staff what they are worth, while at the same time reporting record profits. Thus the only way for staff to get fair treatment is to collectively bargain and occasionally strike. Taking these rights away from the staff gives even more power to the university leadership and gives staff no recourse when they are treated improperly.

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

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.