

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 Courtney Cooke. As a child I was a student within the Columbus and Westerville public school systems, I then earned a bachelor's degree from the College of Wooster, and now I am the parent of an elementary student in the Worthington School District. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

I have many concerns about these bills. My concerns are from the perspective of a parent whose child has a 504 plan and will be choosing their own higher education path within the next decade, from the perspective of someone who had access to a full and inclusive undergraduate program within the State of Ohio, and from the perspective of a citizen who relies on our population to be educated and capable of critical thought. My concerns include, but are not limited to:

- The definition provided in the bill clarifies controversial beliefs or policies as “any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion.”

Faculty would not be allowed to correct students' misconceptions about such “controversial” topics that would fall under this definition, regardless of the actual facts involved. No longer would institutions be able to teach *accurate history* about the Holocaust; the Civil Rights Movement; women's suffrage; the Japanese internment camps that were on American soil; the US Civil War; the Trail of Tears; the May 4, 1970 shootings by National Guardsman of anti-war protestors at Ohio's very own Kent State University; the contributions of Ohio citizens and college students to the second-wave of American feminism; the formation of the Americans with Disabilities Act; the humanitarian crises in Sudan, Congo, Palestine, and in other areas of the world throughout all of time. No longer would our students be exposed to facts about the threat of climate change, which would affect their ability to study things such as the world's rainforests, endangered species, weather patterns, and natural disasters such as hurricanes and tsunamis as well as their impact on communities.

How will our medical students be able to train to provide appropriate care to anyone with a uterus? Will they be taught how to recognize the signs of domestic partner violence or will that also be too “controversial” because it could involve discussions

of marriage? As stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), social determinants of health have a great impact on individuals' well-being. Will our medical students still be able to learn about these social determinants? If not, how will they be able to fully address the needs of their future patients and the communities within which they will work?

This list is not exhaustive, but it is exhausting to think about the lack of education on these topics. It is concerning that there may be young adults educated within our state who do not know the facts about these events and issues, and who are not allowed to be challenged if they have, hear, or perpetuate legitimately incorrect information about anything "controversial." It is terrifying that medical students who will go on to become healthcare providers will not have access to a complete education that includes best practices and current research for all their potential future patients.

- Educators will not want to work in Ohio. We will lose current and no longer attract qualified educators in the future. Why would someone want to work here when meaningful tenure for Ohio's professors would be essentially eradicated; programs, departments, and classes could be cancelled for little to no cause; their syllabi, course schedule, and contact information will be readily available and therefore open them to the possibility of threats and harassment from any political entity or individual who disagrees with what they teach; and there would be prohibitions on faculty members' rights as workers, which could then be used as a precedent to take rights away from all other unions within Ohio?
- Ohio will lose current and future students. These bills not only seek to dismantle programs that have supported diverse and inclusive student bodies and censor what they are allowed to study, but they will also dismantle groups such as sororities, fraternities, academic societies, and campus groups that provide community and support to many students. These bills seek to erase the ability for students to bring their lived experiences to school with them, to deny that real historical (and current) practices and policies such as red-lining, segregation, disenfranchisement, and lack of accommodations for disability continue to have an impact within our country and on our students.

What will this mean for our students who have disabilities? How will this impact our students who need accommodations provided by diversity and inclusion programs to be able to attend higher learning? Are they no longer allowed to participate in

colleges or universities? Will a student's need for an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan preclude them from gaining a degree?

If these bills become law, when my child is ready to move on to higher education he will not be doing so within Ohio. We value a full education, we value critical thinking, we value inclusion and respect for differences, we value equality, we value educators and their right to an existence free from harassment and constant oversight by the government. These bills would create an educational environment that will make it impossible to find any of these values in Ohio higher education institutions.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and extremist bill to protect the rights of Ohio's educators to educate and Ohio's college and university students to learn. Vote NO to protect Ohio's higher education institutions' ability to keep and attract current and future educators and students. Vote NO if for no other reason than because this bill is a gross overreach of government that will impede upon the ability for Ohio colleges and universities to follow through on their most basic of missions- to educate.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louisa Lohm". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and "L".