

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 Amanda Hayes. I teach at a rural campus of Kent State University at Tuscarawas. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

My students are scared by this bill. They are terrified that it will mean an end to free speech in the classroom, where they cannot discuss important topics that might be deemed “controversial” by their government. This is the opposite of how free speech, not to mention democracy, is supposed to be. It would also decimate majors such as social work, a field that we as a nation are desperate to fill. The fact that this bill is being pushed by the party that claims to support small government is particularly horrifying, as it will constitute government overreach into our schools in the grossest manner.

I would also like to take a moment to speak on behalf of myself, my students, and my colleagues who have reason to fear for our very lives due to this bill. Threats of violence against women and LGBTQ peoples is at an all-time high, and unchecked gun violence has made schools far too dangerous as it is. Exposing our classroom materials to potential predators, who find any differences reason enough to commit murder, puts us all at unnecessary risk. I have colleagues who have already been threatened as it is. Higher education is essential to thriving economies, a healthy democracy, and a happy society. This bill attacks all of these.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive and discriminatory bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.