

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kaeli Hughes. I am currently an Assistant Professor in the Physics Department at The Ohio State University. I also grew up in Ohio, went to Ohio State as an undergraduate, and I'm so glad to have the opportunity to be back here working in academia and raising my family here.

I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6. I am opposed for three reasons: the controversial beliefs or policies section, the DEI Ban, and the post tenure review.

When it comes to controversial beliefs, I do not think it makes sense for the government to try to regulate this. For example, in physics many of our most fundamental theories started out as internally controversial- and then they were proven to be true, like Einstein's theory of relativity! It would make no sense to teach physics as if all opinions on relativity are equally plausible. If we require equal time for unequally proven ideas, Ohio students will not be prepared to compete with students from other states who are not subject to these strange requirements.

Regarding DEI, I would like to say this: some of you may have daughters who are considering a career in STEM. This bill will significantly reduce existing programs that would make this path easier for them. I know this because I was once a little girl in Ohio who wanted to become an astrophysicist, and it was programs aimed at women in STEM that helped me realize I really could follow my dreams.

Finally, regarding tenure review: to me, tenure accomplishes two main goals in my field. One, it gives faculty the ability to go after the truth, even when the truth is uncomfortable or unpopular. And two, it offers stability for large-scale projects that have many domestic and international partners. At Ohio State, we already have rigorous tenure requirements and annual review processes, but I think it's important that after a scientist has established themselves as a world-renowned expert in their field, they should be given the freedom to pursue the truth. I say all this as someone who does not yet have tenure! But I can tell you that if the post-tenure process is significantly altered, my collaborators at other institutions around the world will have less trust in Ohio State as a reliable collaborator. This directly impacts grant money potential, which impacts the quality of education students in Ohio will receive, and it will cause scientists to look elsewhere for jobs.

In conclusion, I love Ohio. I feel so lucky to be back working for my alma mater, and I love doing great science here. But, SB 6 and HB 6 make me doubt my ability to stay and develop the scientific program that I think Ohioans would be proud of.