

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. My name is Garth Bishop. Over the course of a 20-year career in journalism here in central Ohio, I've spent an enormous amount of time learning and writing about education, but ultimately, the job that brings me before you today is my most important job: a dad. And as a father who wants his son to have access to the best educational and career opportunities, I want to state my categorical opposition to SB1 and its companion bill, HB6.

I'm sure some of the other speakers today will detail their opposition to the greatest harms of this bill: running off talented educators, making it impossible to accurately teach such subjects as history and medicine, attacks on public sector unions that will be used as a template for attacks on private sector unions and working people in general. But to me, the gravest danger is the "controversial beliefs or policies" section, which is no less than an attack on students' ability to think. I found myself wondering why it is that the people running our state government, who surely have a great many more important things to do, would be putting so much effort into forbidding our students from learning about certain things. And there are a lot of possible answers to that question, but I think I've figured out the right one: You just plain don't think that our kids here in Ohio are very smart.

I know a lot of people have been told, by various angry men on TV and social media, to be terrified about the prospect of their child coming home from college no longer believing 100% of the things their parents believe. But no matter how hard you helicopter-parent, sooner or later, your kid is going to be exposed to information that doesn't jibe with their existing beliefs. My son is in elementary school, so I don't know whether college is going to be part of his career path in a few years. But I do know that, if he does go to college here, he's going to be exposed there to views that challenge his own, maybe even that challenge the values I've worked so hard to instill in him. And I welcome it, because I realize that people never learn to stand up for their beliefs unless those beliefs are periodically challenged. I want my child to know how to stand up for what he believes in, and I think most parents want the same for their kids.

You claim you don't want kids to be "indoctrinated." Well, the easiest person to indoctrinate is the person who's never been challenged on their beliefs. If you really do think our kids are dumb, and that they won't know the difference between right and wrong by the time they reach college, then by all means, keep working to censor dangerous ideas. But I, personally, think our kids are a lot smarter than you give them credit for. And parents across Ohio will be a lot happier if you treat them that way. If you really want Ohio's young people to have values, to have strong principles, and to be prepared for the working world – where, you should keep in mind, their pre-existing beliefs are undoubtedly going to be tested – you shouldn't coddle them by ensuring they never have to hear a contrary opinion. I ask you to consider this perspective and vote no on this needlessly destructive bill.