

Testimony of Erynn Beaton, Ph.D.
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
May 15, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Erynn Beaton, and I am a professor of public affairs at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for 8 years. I do not represent The Ohio State University today but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen on HB96. I focus my testimony on how this bill will impact us at OSU, raising two important issues: 1) board of trustee control of curriculum, and 2) student mental health.

Board of trustee control of university curriculum: The bill currently states that faculty can provide advice on “academic programs, curricula, courses, general education requirements, and degree programs,” but they have no authority to create or change them. Instead, the board has “final, overriding authority to establish or reject establishment or modification of any of those subjects.” I interpret this to say that the general assembly wants the trustees to approve every new and changed course. As far as I can tell, the Ohio code never defines what constitutes a course change, and I can tell you I change my courses every time I teach them in order to keep them fresh for students. To understand the scope of work entailed, I’ll share some numbers. In the Spring 2025 semester alone, OSU Columbus offered over [10,000 in-person undergraduate courses](#). I also took the liberty of counting how many proposals the OSU Council on Academic Affairs considered to create or change majors, minors, and certificates in the past academic year. [The number is 132](#). These figures are significant compared to the [4 pieces of curriculum](#) the OSU Board of Trustees considered this academic year. Effectively reviewing all this curriculum requires experienced, qualified, full-time employees, which is why faculty are traditionally given this task. I urge you to seriously reconsider these provisions. A policy without [technical feasibility](#) is a bad policy.

Student mental health services: The bill currently eliminates \$20 million that was budgeted for campus mental health over the past two years, despite the governor’s proposal to continue this funding. In 2024 and 2025, OSU was allocated [\\$2.5 million of this funding](#) and put it toward programs like teletherapy, mental health grants, and the Buckeye Resource Center. Studies indicate that [70% of college students](#) struggle with mental health. Every semester, I have more students missing classes due to challenges with mental health. Students tell me that it’s hard to get mental health services on campus, and there is frequently a long waitlist to get support. Mental health needs to be a priority. We can’t give precedence to things like Cleveland State wrestling (to which \$800,000 is allocated) over our students’ mental health.

Sincerely,
Erynn Beaton