



**State Senator Stephanie Kunze
16th Ohio Senate District**

***Senator Stephanie Kunze
Senate Bill 126
March 24, 2021
Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Sponsor Testimony***

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee. Thank you for allowing us to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 126 also known as Collin's Law.

The intent of Collin's law is to address the problem of hazing that is affecting college and university students across our state. This legislation arose after the death of Collin Wiant, a student at Ohio University, whose life was cut short due to hazing as part of initiation to a fraternity. Recently we received news that another young man, Stone Foltz of Bowling Green State University, passed away in another suspected tragic hazing incident. The predatory behavior that led to these deaths must be addressed.

Senate Bill 126 is different from House Bill 310 from the last General Assembly as the bill now only pertains to hazing and not K-12 bullying. Working with the Wiant Family and the Inter-University Council, we have also changed HB 310 language to ensure that the bill gives clear definitions of what constitutes as hazing and what the penalties created by this legislation are.

This legislation would add specificity to the definition of hazing by stating that hazing also includes causing, forcing, soliciting, or coercing a victim to:

- Violate federal or state criminal law
- Consume any food, liquid, alcoholic liquid, drug of abuse, or other substance which subjects the victim to a risk of emotional or physical harm
- Cause a substantial risk of emotional harm to another

Senate Bill 126 states that no person shall knowingly participate in, commit, solicit another person to commit, or be actively involved in the planning of the hazing of another. No administrator, employee, or faculty member of any primary, secondary, or post-secondary school or of any other educational institution, public or private, shall knowingly permit the hazing of any person. Any person who violates this is guilty of hazing under this bill. Penalties can range from a fourth degree misdemeanor to a felony of the fifth degree if physical harm is caused.

This legislation would also create the offense of aggravated hazing, which would be a second-degree felony if the violation causes serious physical harm, substantial risk of serious physical harm, or death to the victim of hazing and either of the following applies to the person who commits the violation:

- The person acted with reckless indifference to the health and safety of the victim of hazing.

- The person caused, coerced, or forced the consumption of an alcoholic liquid or a drug of abuse by the victim of hazing.

The bill will also create the offense of supporting hazing which would apply in instances where hazing is not reported. We would also like to specify that no individual who is a member of an organization (as defined) shall fail to report hazing to law enforcement or could be charged with the supporting hazing offense.

This bill would also direct the Chancellor of Higher Education to develop a statewide educational plan for preventing hazing at institutions of higher education. This model policy would be distributed to all institutions of higher education in Ohio. The guidelines will be developed for students enrolled in an institution, administrators, faculty members, and individuals employed by an institution, and organizations recognized by, or operating under the sanction of, an institution. The institutions of higher education would be tasked with developing an anti-hazing policy. This policy is to be distributed to all student organizations and posted on the university's website. Institutions of higher education would also provide students with an online or in-person educational program on hazing during new student orientation. A student would not be eligible to participate in an organization recognized by the institution until they have completed the hazing education program. All staff and volunteers that advise or coach an organization recognized by or operating under the sanction of an institution and who have direct contact with students would also be provided the mandatory training. Each institution would also maintain a report of cases of confirmed hazing on their campuses.

This legislation is not only about enhancing existing penalties but pushes a change in campus culture. Increased consequences for hazing show how serious we as a state will take hazing. The education pieces included in Collin's Law will go towards demonstrating to and educating our college and university students so that they can and will recognize the signs and dangers of hazing.

Chairman Johnson and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you again for allowing us to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 126. I will now turn the podium over to my joint-sponsor Senator Gavarone.