



# DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

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**SB 126 Collin's Law: The Ohio Anti-Hazing Act**  
**Written Proponent Testimony**  
**March 31, 2021**

Chairman Johnson, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee—thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on behalf of Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost in support of SB 126. This legislation, also known as Collin's Law: The Ohio Anti-Hazing Act, would update Ohio law to provide additional tools to combat hazing.

For many, hazing is still viewed as a good natured, silly, or innocuous rite of passage that is part of the college experience. To the extent that an organization initiates a member through reasonable contests, training, competitions, or other events, the above characterization is largely accurate and these experiences are not the focus of this bill.

Rather, hazing is defined in SB 126 as forcing, soliciting, or coercing another to do any act of initiation that causes a substantial risk of physical or mental harm and includes violating a state or federal law, or forcing the consumption of any food, liquid, alcoholic liquid, drug of abuse, or other substance. When defined like this, these activities are already prohibited by universities on their campuses due to the often-tragic consequences that ensue. In spite of this, calamities related to hazing persist.

In addition to spotlighting the identified deleterious consequences of hazing, SB 126 seeks to also align commensurate criminal penalties for the worst examples of this behavior. Whether it be the forced ingestion of large amounts of alcohol as in the recent case of Stone Foltz at Bowling Green State University, or the forced inhalation of nitrous oxide as in the case of the bill's namesake Collin Wiant, SB 126 provides penalties consistent with the known dangers of this conduct.

Under the bill, the offense of aggravated hazing makes it 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 the person acted with reckless indifference to the health and safety of the victim of hazing, or the person caused, coerced, or forced the consumption of an alcoholic liquid or a drug of abuse by the victim of hazing. Another notable and commendable feature of the bill is that it creates a duty for anyone watching illegal hazing to report mishaps if the hazing causes physical harm. In some cases, because others failed to report hazing that caused physical harm, individuals who may have benefited from prompt medical treatment did not receive it.

Our office would like to commend both Senators Kunze and Gavarone for their leadership on this critical issue. The negative effects of hazing are well documented. While no law can completely eradicate this behavior, by holding perpetrators and supporters of hazing accountable, SB 126 is a step in the right direction. We look forward to working with the sponsors to achieve their vision for this bill during the legislative process.