

Proponent Testimony of Tyler Perino on SB 126
Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
March 31, 2021

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Committee, my name is Tyler Perino, and I am here to today to testify in support of SB 126. For me, this is not an academic issue, but a very personal one. After hazing landed me unconscious in the hospital, I made a promise to myself to do everything possible to help put an end to this dangerous practice.

In January of 2019, as a student at Miami University, I participated in Greek Rush. After I accepted a bid to the Delta Tau Delta Fraternity, the hazing began almost immediately. In early February, I was brought to the Delta House along with 29 other pledges. We were forced to stay up all night and interview each other—this went on for 15 hours. At about 6:00 a.m., the active members forced all of the pledges to go into the basement for a “workout.” This involved wall sits, planks, and push-ups. During the “work out,” there was broken glass strewn around on the basement floor where the pledges were being forced to work out, after being completely deprived of sleep. After being up all night and completing the “workout,” I went directly to my 8:30 a.m. class.

A few days later, Delta held a “Poker Night” where pledges were forced to spend \$80-90 each on various items, including alcohol (approximately 30 bottles of liquor), marijuana (nearly 40 joints), pizzas, and other items. During the night, one of the active members became very intoxicated and pushed a pledge who fell, cracked open his head, and was taken to the hospital.

Later on, the active members held a “Brotherhood Bonding” with about 30 pledges where I was forced to drink an entire bag of wine (approximately 100 oz) along with two other pledges, “shotgun” five beers, and drink several cans of Four Loko. Afterwards, I was forced to do wall sits while I vomited from all of the forced drinking. Another “Brotherhood Bonding” event was

held where I, along with other pledges, were forced to drink large quantities of alcohol. Delta members covered the pledges in some unknown powder and put peanut butter and jelly under the pledges' eyes. I had not eaten much that day and felt very sick. I told the active members I needed to something to eat and they brought me what looked like dog food.

I was also forced to be available at all hours for various tasks, such as buying cigarettes or chewing tobacco for the active members. We pledges were also forced to drink large quantities of alcohol and then sing to large groups of sorority members in an effort to humiliate us.

After March 1st when Miami cutoff the pledging process and university oversight ended, the hazing got worse at so-called "initiation" events. The active members still referred to me and the others as "pledges" and told us that we'd have to earn their respect by doing whatever they said.

During an initiation event in March, 2019, I was told "Tonight is an all night thing and yes you will be drinking." I arrived at the Fraternity House early that evening. As soon as I walked in, I was told to put a blindfold on and was put in a room with the 24 other pledges. At one point, the active members singled me out because I hadn't been coming to recent events as I was having trouble with grades.

Someone grabbed me from the couch and put me on the floor, which was covered in beer. I was told to do "meowups," which are pushups while making a "meowing" sound. After doing 20-30 pushups, I put my knee on the ground to take a break. One of the active members kicked me in the chest to prompt me to keep going. I continued to do "meowups."

After I finished, I was forced to sit on the knees of two pledges. I was told the other pledges were "carrying" me, so I had to sit on their laps. During this time, I was told "you're so

f**d” and someone spit beer in my face. They would whisper in my ear and then slap me across the face multiple times.

After about 60 minutes of this, we were taken to rooms to meet our “big brothers.” I then heard another pledge getting struck with a paddle and heard him start screaming and cussing. The next thing I knew, the active members were rubbing a paddle between my legs. Out of nowhere, I got hit with a paddle on my backside. I began to scream. The paddle had holes and grooves on it and had edges that caused extensive bruising and cuts on my backside. I threatened to leave, but was told “the first one hurts the most and then you’ll get numb to it and it won’t hurt that much. Get back on the wall.” Throughout the night, I was paddled repeatedly, was forced to drink 6 Smirnoff Ice in less than five minutes, and vomited numerous times. When I thought it was all over, I was handed a bottle of Crowne Royal and told I had to finish the bottle that night – they told me to “chug until you puke.” Other pledges were gathered in a circle with each pledge chugging hard liquor until they vomited. I vomited after nearly every sip of the Crown Royal.

Numerous times through the night active members would say “Hey Tyler, get on the wall” and proceed to paddle me. As if this was not enough, later in the evening, I was handed a joint and told to smoke it because it “would help the pain.” After that, I was put on the wall again and told that it was “tradition” to paddle the pledges on their bare buttocks and I was paddled directly on my backside.

At some point after it was clear I was unable to continue any further because of the drugs, alcohol, and physical abuse, I was taken back to my dorm and left there. I continued to vomit in my dorm room and felt like I was going to die. I blacked out and 911 was called. I was transported to the hospital where they determined I had a blood alcohol count (BAC) of .231. My buttocks had cuts and extensive bruising as can be seen from this photo.



I awoke in a hospital room not sure how I had gotten there. I received a text from the Delta Tau Delta chapter president, which read:

“Please do not say anything that would threaten the future of the fraternity either, this organization means a ton to me.”

Two days later, my parents traveled to Oxford to pick me up and take me back to our home in Toledo. I transferred to the University of Toledo to get a fresh start. But I feel compelled to speak out about the hazing that was inflicted on me and the other pledges at Delta Tau Delta.

Sadly, a culture of hazing has taken hold in too many organizations and campuses throughout our state. It’s often embraced as tradition. Young people accept it and then go on to be perpetrators of it. Some even feel like it’s an important part of their growth to adulthood.

It has to stop. But it won’t be easy given the traditions and culture that exist in our state. It will take strong penalties, enforcement, education and training. I want to thank Senators Kunze and Gavarone for thoughtfully crafting a bill that combines all of these features. I believe

passage of SB 126 will not only make a real difference in preventing hazing, I believe it will save lives. That's why I'm so grateful for this Committee's work on this bill, and appreciative that you have given me the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions you may have.

Thank you.