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Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Minority Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide written proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 126 on behalf of The University of Akron (UA). My name is Dr. John Messina, and I serve as Vice President of Student Affairs at UA. I oversee the many programs and services designed to educate, engage, and enrich the lives of our diverse population of nearly 20,000 students through social, personal, health and wellness development, academic engagement and retention within UA's Student Affairs and Student Success units.

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 126, Collin's Law, sponsored by Senators Stephanie Kunze and Theresa Gavarone. I would like to thank the sponsors for their work in drafting this legislation and for reaching out to UA and our fellow higher education institutions throughout the process for our review and comment. I would also like to thank Kathleen Wiant for her desire to protect university students so that other families do not experience the pain she and her family have experienced. Our administration, faculty, and staff at UA are also committed to educating our students about and protecting them from hazing.

As Gary L. Miller, president of UA, recently noted, "We continue to have zero tolerance for hazing of any type at The University of Akron." Fortunately, we have had few hazing cases. In the past 10 years, we have had 3 groups found responsible for hazing, and we dealt with them immediately. Senate Bill 126 reinforces many practices that UA has previously implemented to protect our students. Allow me to review some of our current anti-hazing initiatives.

All UA first-year students and other new and transfer students receive training in the student code of conduct and campus safety in which hazing is addressed. The student code of conduct includes an explicit statement against hazing:

Hazing, as defined by the Ohio Revised Code and federal law, is prohibited. It is a violation of this rule for an individual, knowing that hazing has been or is being committed, to knowingly fail to report such information to law enforcement authorities or to student conduct and community standards. Officers of a student organization must report any hazing incident(s) of which they are aware. The consent of the victim is not a defense.

A second phase of our training, *Enhancing a Culture of Respect*, is also available to all returning students. This training focuses on bystander intervention, reporting and creating cultural change to support positive experiences. Registered student organizations, of which we have 334, are required to participate in training to continue their official recognition. Several organizations, including fraternities and sororities, participate in additional opportunities, including training sponsored by their national organizations. Athletics, Band and Club Sports also provide supplemental training and support to their athletes and competitors.

Due to COVID-19, all our anti-hazing training sessions were online this past year. We track and record student participation across the University. The Dean of Students and New Student Orientation track participation of new and returning students. Student Life and Fraternity and Sorority Life maintain records in their systems for registered student organizations. Athletics provides mandatory training and tracks participation for student athletes.

I and others at UA look forward to continuing to work with the sponsors and Kathleen Wiant to eliminate hazing. We believe that UA's current efforts coupled with Senate Bill 126 will help achieve this goal. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 126. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

John A. Messina, Ed.D
Vice President for Student Affairs