



## Proponent Testimony Regarding Substitute House Bill 606 Inter-University Council of Ohio

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee. I am Nick Derksen and currently serve as the Vice-President of Government Relations for the Inter-University Council of Ohio (IUC). IUC offers proponent testimony today regarding Substitute House Bill 606 (HB606) under the committee's consideration.

The IUC was established in 1939 as a voluntary educational association of Ohio's public universities. Today the association represents Ohio's 14 public universities. Together, these institutions offer a broad range of associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and professional programs. Ohio's public universities collectively contribute approximately \$67.8 billion to Ohio's economy.<sup>1</sup>

We would like to thank Representatives Pizzulli and Jarrells, and the committee for working with our association and our universities, in collaboration with the Ohio Jewish Communities, on amendments that were incorporated into the substitute bill that is before you today. IUC is grateful for the committee's support of these changes, and we are confident that HB 606 provides a runway for Ohio's institutions of higher education to continue meaningful and actionable efforts on the prevention of racial, religious, and ethnic harassment and intimidation. As the bill sponsors stated in their sponsor testimony, our universities are committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful educational environment for all students and IUC believes that HB 606 provides a framework to help all institutions of higher education in Ohio achieve this.

### **Model Policy**

First and most importantly, following an interested parties meeting, and our understanding and the commitment of the Chancellor with the Ohio Jewish Communities, the substitute bill creates a committee to establish model policy and recommendations for combatting antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of racial, religious, and ethnic harassment and intimidation. This committee will have at least six main objectives to include in the model policy and allow for appropriate stakeholder engagement. IUC believes this collaboration will lead to the best possible outcomes for the intended goals of this legislation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lightcast. (2023). Analysis of the Economic Impact and Return on Investment of Education: The Public Universities of Ohio. *Inter-University Council of Ohio*. [https://iuc-ohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/IUC-Economic-Impact-Study-MainReport\\_2122\\_Final.pdf](https://iuc-ohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/IUC-Economic-Impact-Study-MainReport_2122_Final.pdf)



IUC appreciates the committee's decision to include the definitions of "harassment" and "intimidation" to help provide clarity to the policy adoption requirement found in section 3320.05.

### **Campus Task Force**

The substitute bill before this committee would require the institutions of higher education to create a campus task force aimed to combat antisemitism, Islamophobia, and hatred, harassment, bullying or violence towards others on the basis of their perceived or actual religious identity at the institution. This work will complement the existing [Changing Campus Culture](#) initiative at the Ohio Department of Higher Education. For example, the University of Akron presently has the SAVE Team that works effectively with the Title IX Team as well as supportive entities such as the local domestic abuse shelter, Hope & Healing. We would support, in working with the Chancellor, a similar framework that could be developed when dealing with these issues.

### **Campus Safety Grant Programs**

IUC is thankful for the committee's support to provide additional funding for the Chancellor to increase security and safety support for institution-sanctioned organizations with communities that are at risk for increased threats of violent crime, terror attacks, hate crimes, or harassment under the new Campus Student Safety Grant Program, and funding for the Campus Community Grant Program and the Campus Security Grant Program. These dollars will go a long way to enhance security measures and increase student safety across all of our institutions.

### **Annual Reporting**

Lastly, IUC is appreciative of the committee's understanding regarding the annual reporting of all allegations of racial, religious, and ethnic harassment and intimidation received by the institution and other documented incidents at the institution in a given academic year. As many of you know, institutions of higher education are not allowed to publicly divulge the personally identifiable information of students due to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Thank you for your willingness to provide parity amongst all the institutions of higher education to include reporting requirements of all harassment and intimidation reports consistent with the federal [Clery Act](#). We greatly appreciate the sponsors' willingness and thoughtfulness for consistency with what is currently reported.

In conclusion, Ohio's public universities are essential to Ohio's economy and communities. IUC appreciates the committee's swift action on these policy aspects of the latest version of House Bill 606. Chairman Edwards and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present proponent testimony today on behalf of IUC.