

## The Ohio State University Senate Resolution on Ohio House Bill 616

**Synopsis:** HB616 is Ohio's variant of Florida's recently passed "Parental Rights in Education" bill, that opponents call the "Don't Say Gay" bill. We are concerned the Ohio bill contains significant restrictions on teacher education of "divisive or inherently racist concepts" that specifies critical race theory, historical studies of racism and prejudice, and pedagogical instruction designed to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion. As the training of K-12 teachers occurs at Ohio State and throughout higher education, this will limit academic freedom and curtail the responsibilities of university faculty to encourage critical thinking and the pursuit of truth in the classroom.

**Whereas** the Ohio State Faculty Council voted to oppose HB616 on April 14, 2022; and

**Whereas** the Faculty Council Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching Truth About Racism presents this updated resolution to the April 21 University Senate for vote; and

**Whereas** Ohio law requires faculty to "pursue excellence, intellectual honesty, and objectivity in teaching" and considers them "essential to the preservation of a free society" as per Ohio Administrative Code 3335-5-01; and

**Whereas** since 1870 The Ohio State University's stated purpose has been education for citizenship; and

**Whereas** HB 616 undermines the core values of Ohio State by restricting the free exchange of ideas between students and faculty; and

**Whereas** HB 616 puts faculty members, students, contingent instructors, and K-12 educators at risk by attacking faculty rights to academic freedom and our responsibility to teach truth about racism; and

**Whereas** HB616 takes aim at so-called "divisive concepts" and adds a prejudicial anti-LGBTQIA policy banning educators from discussing sexual identity and gender orientation in K-3 classrooms, and limiting these discussions in 4-12 classrooms; and

**Whereas** HB616 precludes children of same-sex parents from talking about their families or seeing them reflected in books and curricular materials, which is important from literacy, motivation, social, emotional, and engagement perspectives; and

**Whereas** HB616 is misleading as it implies discussing sexuality and gender identity means talking about sex and sexual relations when these discussions are about family, and respond to children who wish to learn about their own identities; and

**Whereas** students with marginalized identities are harmed by bullying, prejudice, discrimination, ostracizing, shaming, and targeted discipline, likely resulting in anger turned inward through self-destructive behaviors—suicidal attempts, depression, anxiety—or outward through risky behaviors; and

**Whereas** HB616 continues a false narrative about “divisive concepts” that dehumanizes children and families, the LGBTQIA+ community, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, immigrants, and other members of the global majority, which is antithetical to humanistic and scientific inquiry and infringes on academic freedom and responsibility; and

**Whereas** HB616 states “*No teacher shall receive continuing education credit or other credit required for licensure renewal for any seminar or other program that teaches, promotes, or endorses divisive or inherently racist concepts,*” which, according to the bill’s authors, means everything from critical race theory, intersectional theory, and *The 1619 Project* to “diversity, equity, and inclusion learning outcomes,” the latter of which are outcomes and goals that this university whole-heartedly embraces as central to several of our approved General Education themes; and

**Whereas** HB616 requires “*The state board shall not adopt any standards, model curricula, professional development resources, classroom resources, or assessments promoting divisive or inherently racist concepts as described in this section.*” This is a misuse of the term “racist” to describe an anti-racist curriculum that endangers the university’s school and community partnerships. The curricula set forth by HB616 would not meet licensing, continuing education, and other crediting requirements; and

**Whereas** elected leaders in opposition include Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther, who states HB616 is “bigotry in one of its ugliest forms;” and

**Whereas** Ohio State President Kristina Johnson inspires inclusive excellence for all, warning “the state must foster a welcoming environment for current and future citizens, and HB 616 runs contrary to these efforts;” and

**Whereas** United States President Joe Biden, on enactment of the Florida bill on which HB616 is based, expressed compassion for “the kids who will be impacted by this hateful bill” and vowed “my Administration will continue to fight for the protections and safety [the kids] deserve;” and

**Whereas** HB616 enables political control inside each classroom, a dangerous precedent with long-term negative impact, including impingement on faculty independence and responsibilities, restrictions on critical thinking and the [free exchange of ideas](#), jeopardizing [accreditation](#) by the Higher Learning Commission and positioning Ohio at a competitive disadvantage; and

**Whereas** the University Senate Steering Committee at its April 14, 2022 meeting voted unanimously in favor of enabling Senate affirmation of this resolution on our April 21 Senate agenda.

**Therefore, Let It Be Resolved:**

**The Ohio State faculty senate opposes HB616.** We oppose political control of the content of K-12 and higher education. HB616 is antithetical to the values we share within Ohio State and puts Ohio at a competitive disadvantage. This bill and its variants breed segregation and distrust when Ohio can advance with inclusion and wisdom.

*Respectfully submitted by the Faculty Council Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching the Truth About Racism;*

- Caroline Clark, Professor of Teaching and Learning, Ad Hoc Teaching the Truth About Racism Chair.
- Elizabeth Hewitt, Professor of English.
- Sara Watson, Associate Professor of Political Science.
- Russell Hassan, Professor and Wolf Chair of Public and International Affairs.
- Jill Galvan, Associate Professor of English.
- Jared Gardner, Professor of English.
- Ken Lee, Professor of Food Science & Technology, Chair of the Faculty Council of the University Senate, Higher Learning Commission Peer Corps member.
- Subbu Kumarappan, Associate Professor of Agribusiness and Ag Economics.
- Colette T. Dollarhide, Professor and Program Chair, Counselor Education.