

Good morning, Esteemed Legislators,

My name is Shannon Winnubst and I am a Professor at the Ohio State University. I hold a PhD in Philosophy, with a specialization in the History of Western Philosophy, from the Pennsylvania State University and I received my BA from the University of Notre Dame in the Great Books of Western Civilization. I have studied all the classics of western culture and published extensively in European philosophy, culture, and history.

I clearly believe in education and have dedicated my life and career to it. I believe it is the cornerstone of our democracy. I believe that a well-educated citizenry makes the world a better place for all people---for all people, not just the select few who are in power.

I also care about the state of Ohio. I moved here with my family in 2008 to join Ohio State and have been happy to raise my child here. I have found an unabashed love of neighbors, of communities, of schools, of sports teams, of city, of state, and of nation in all the people I meet in Ohio. I believe Ohio is a place of earnestness, full of people who want to do the right thing.

I have also always been deeply impressed by the long history of a strong devotion to higher education in the state of Ohio. Some of the finest universities in the nation are in Ohio. These universities are filled with the Ohio spirit of solving problems, caring for communities (especially the most marginalized communities), and improving the lives of everyone in the state. With world class sports teams that match the world class research and teaching underway in these excellent universities, Ohio has long been a place with great pride in its system of higher education.

This bill, HB 151, will endanger all of this. It aims to threaten the very heart of education—namely, the cultivation of the courage to encounter and embrace things that are *different* from us. From Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine and Martin Luther to Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the great thinkers of the western tradition consistently educate us about the power of difference—a power that can strengthen us when embraced, but also poison us when feared. It can strengthen us as individuals, communities and societies when embraced, but also poison us as individuals, communities and societies when feared. HB 151 is feeding the poisonous fear of difference.

I conclude with a little bit of history.

The history of higher education in Ohio is similar to the history across the United States and the world. Since their beginnings, universities have been primarily a place to educate the elite. This runs against the core principles of democracy and, across the late 20th century, the gates of the university were broken down. From the GI Bill following WWII to the various parts of the Civil Rights Movement, we have seen the ongoing democratizing of higher education in the United

States. Universities are no longer the exclusive club of the elite: everyone—literally every single background and community—is now able to become educated at this highest level.

When this happens, when a longstanding elite institution becomes democratized, the standard practices are challenged. For higher education, this has entailed a broadening of the histories and cultures that are researched and taught in our classrooms. The 21st century university is a globalized, fast-paced environment that is quite different from the one most of us in this room experienced as undergraduates. But I am here to assure all of you that it remains committed to the ongoing fundamental principle of the modern university, and the explicit model of the Ohio State University—namely, to educate for citizenship.

I was hired at Ohio State in 2008 in the Department of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies where I am now the Chair of the Department. Many rumors swirl about what we are doing in our department—in our research and especially in our classrooms. I conclude, therefore, with an invitation to each of you to come for a visit—to come just down High Street to our office and our classrooms of the Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies Department at Ohio State. I invite you to join us in the rigorous, open discussions of American history, culture, politics and ethics that are the curriculum we teach. Our classrooms are filled with spirited debate and sharp analysis of some of the most profound challenges and changes in American culture. I invite you to join us in sustaining a space of civil discourse about how to embrace difference and continue to cultivate this long project of democracy that looks and feels so different in this 21st century.

Hope to see you soon!