

Hello. My name is Grace Shults, I am about to enter my fifth year at Ohio State as a Psychology Major. I wanted to testify that I am strongly opposed to HB 151.

The proposed changes to Higher Education that are in this bill are harmful to students, faculty, and the learning process in higher education overall. Making education more equitable for everyone is not a bad thing, and should not be treated as so. This bill proposes to censor students and faculty through banning DEI trainings, making syllabi public, and creating new mandates in the classroom as a “protection of intellectual diversity rights.”

There is a fact that this proposed legislation ignores: while college students are young, we are still adults. We have the capacity to make up our own minds, and shape our own world views as we see fit. Our lawmakers do not need to be involved in telling us how to learn in an environment that we pay money to attend.

It is ironic as it has been proposed in the name of “protecting academic freedom.” True academic freedom involves **adding** to existing curriculum and having open conversation about ideas, whether we agree with them or not. We are allowed to disagree with each other, in fact it’s been encouraged at my university. Not everyone at my university believes in left-leaning ideals either, which is absolutely their right. This bill makes it seem as if adult learners in college are needing to be “saved from indoctrination” of traditionally left-leaning ideals, whether that is being blatantly said or not. Frankly, that is condescending to our intelligence.

Making education more accessible, and as inclusive as possible helps the learning process, and should not be a political statement anyway. Having DEI trainings are not a negative thing if we can learn more about each other and make learning environments safer places for everyone, whether our lawmakers agree with that or not. Being watched and having our educational content checked over by our lawmakers, or having to report our professors in the name of “academic freedom” is also not protecting us, it’s feckless, suppressive and harmful all around. Having to learn while walking on eggshells is not what academic freedom is. Students deserve to have a fair, accessible, and quality education, and university faculty members deserve to be treated as if they are qualified to deliver said education, because they absolutely are.

I ask this committee to vote against HB 151, in the name of freedom in the academic space, and protecting academia as a generator for discourse, new ideas, and learning. Thank you for your time.