

Opposition to HB 151
Higher Education Committee
May 17, 2023

Dimaya Mayfield, Kent State Student
Black United Students, Ohio Student Association, & IGNITE

Dear, Chairman Young, Ranking Member Miller, and House Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in opposition to House Bill 151. My name is Dimaya Mayfield. I am a black student from Youngstown who attends Kent State University, as well as works part-time while I attend school. In addition to this, I am the Director of Student Relations for Black United Students, the Vice President of the IGNITE chapter on my campus, and a member of Ohio Student Association. I'm here to express concern and opposition around House Bill 151.

As a black student at a predominately white institution, the feeling of isolation or separation from the people who share similar backgrounds and look like you is incredibly easy-so much so that at Kent State has a mentoring program and orientation tailored to African American, Latinx, Hispanic, Native American and Multiracial students. This program aims to provide these students with a sense of community *before* the rest of the student population comes for their orientation as well. This program, Kuptia/Transiciones, was fundamental in providing *me* with a community to lean on, as well as providing me the space to explore and understand **MY** black identity. My own Org, Black United Students, as well as the Africana Students department at Kent, provide the spaces and resources I need to learn the parts of **my** history that weren't taught to me growing up. These courses, programs, and organizations, are essential to preparing myself to aid marginalized communities like my own. Despite this, House Bill 151

threatens to remove these spaces which have proved to be extremely beneficial and essential to the black experience on Kent's campus.

At Kent State University, the division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion conducted a climate study on race. The study offered students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to describe their personal experiences and observations, as well as a chance to offer suggestions for change to help enhance the climate on Kent State's campus. This qualitative analysis asked many questions including 'Have you seriously considered leaving and why?'. Sense of belonging was a key reason why students, faculty and staff considered leaving. Major takeaways included: cultural concerns are unaddressed, lack of adequate resources, and significant remarks on negative faculty interactions. There is a need on Kent State University's campus, as well as other college campuses, for community and cultural spaces to support and bring its' students together, especially in the sense that our groups are significantly smaller than the rest of the student population.

I'm asking that these resources and spaces be protected from the threat that House Bill 151 poses to them. I'm also asking that you consider the wellbeing and sense of belonging that marginalized students could no longer feel without their respective communities and organizations. With all of this being said, I finally ask that you please consider my testimony in opposition to House Bill 151. Thank you.