

Members of the House Higher Education committee,

Thank you for letting me speak today. My name is Garrison Bowling. I founded an organization known as the Ohio Student Activist Alliance. I founded this group because I saw that the voices of young people were being suppressed in our state. I watched as the general assembly introduced pieces of legislation that targeted LGBT and minority youth. I watched as our political leaders passed legislation that took away the voting rights of young people.

Finally, I decided to do something about it. Through my work as an organizer, I have met thousands of young Ohioans who feel that they are not being represented. They feel that their vote doesn't matter, that their voice is being suppressed and that their rights are being taken away.

Those young people are the ones who will vote you out of office.

House Bill 151 is just another attempt to suppress the voices of young people and educators. This bill is an attack on our first amendment right. The very foundation of democracy requires that everyone get to have a voice. Throughout history, the signs of fascism come in small moments when the rights of the people are taken away in committee meetings and when our leaders think that the world isn't watching, but we are.

We are the students of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

As students, we should be allowed to express a wide variety of viewpoints. You cannot teach American history without teaching African American history, and you cannot teach American history without teaching queer history. But the language in House Bill 151 puts those lessons at risk of being taken away because of what lawmakers perceive as bias. It's not bias, it's history, and it's what needs to be taught.

If this bill passes, many students have said they will leave Ohio. I'm concerned that some of the Ohio lawmakers want students to leave. I think they are afraid of young people and they are afraid of what we are capable of.

I want you to know that I'm not leaving. I'm going to stay and continue working to make my state better. I want a bright future for Ohio and that's why I'm asking all of you to vote against HB 151.