

I am a 3rd year student at Ohio State studying accounting and public policy. I am from New Jersey where I grew up surrounded by people from a variety of ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds. This exposure from a young age to people who were different from myself allowed me to grow up to be a more empathetic, understanding, accepting, and open person. I am also Jewish, I grew up in a town with a vibrant Jewish community where I was fortunate enough to experience more love than hate for who I am. The diversity of my community is no doubt responsible for this. However positive this upbringing was, I was always aware of the wider world's intolerance of people like me and the other diverse communities in my town. I knew that when I came to college I would face people who would not like me simply because I am Jewish and because I am proud of it.

By banning mandatory DEI trainings and programs, hiring and education around what you call "controversial beliefs and policies", affinity groups, and affirmative action practices you are making the world a more intolerant and ignorant place. When people aren't exposed to people and cultures different from their own they become afraid of it. Throughout history we've seen bad actors try to turn people against each other by using fear of those who are different from ourselves. We are witnessing a dangerous set of changes in this country from banning books to banning diversity equity and inclusion initiatives. These are all aimed at controlling what we hear, see and learn. Republicans claim to want a smaller government that is less controlling, but all I see here from them is a goal of controlling our beliefs in order to elevate and protect white supremacy. Why are you afraid of education? Why are you afraid of people who are different from you? Why are you so threatened by inclusivity and diversity that you feel the need to go so far as to try to limit their reach?

You should think long and hard about what you're doing and how you will be looking at policies such as this one in the future. History does not look well upon those who seek to close our worlds and make them smaller. The students in Ohio deserve to be exposed to a diversity of ideas and opinions. Education is meant to make our worlds bigger and to allow us to grow, this bill would cast a cloud over education in Ohio and will only serve to make this country more ignorant and intolerant."