

Good Morning, my name is Ash Bateman and my pronouns are he/him/his. I am a Social Work major at the University of Cincinnati focusing on Political Science for advocacy and policy work on the rights of minority groups. First of all, I'd like to start off by saying that there's nothing wrong with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. These DEI classes, trainings and events allow us to gain the perspectives of others and are imperative to the curriculum of many degree programs.

We in America are the melting pot of the world, it is the country of numerous cultures, backgrounds, belief systems and values, and that isn't a bad thing. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging that America is a melting pot, it's actually really cool that we are. Getting exposed to these variety of cultures and backgrounds does not indoctrinate us; it allows us to freely be free to make our own decisions and to be caring, culturally sensitive individuals. I chose social work because I wanted to study DEI, I was not indoctrinated into doing so. I am fascinated by the various backgrounds and cultural influences of others and want to help combat the discrepancies that minorities face. Which leads me to controversial topics.

Nearly every thought and idea is controversial. As humans, we are beings capable of complex thought and therefore are good at coming up with new ideas and making decisions on what we believe is true. Depending on where we live, how we grow up and who we are, we also bring forth new perspectives, and this isn't a bad thing. Everybody brings a different perspective to the table and sharing those experiences allows for others who did not grow up under the same conditions to gain insight and perspective that not everybody's life is perfect. There are, in fact, many issues that negatively impact people, majorly, minorities. Concepts like these that you call controversial are hard to talk about, it can even be scary at times. Discussing climate change, gun reform, systematic racism and more isn't easy. A lot of the time, there is no one-size fits all answer. But what's important is that we recognize each other's perspectives, understand that we each come from different backgrounds and work together to create solutions. Change is scary to think about. There's the question of 'how' constantly lingering above our heads. How will limiting fossil fuels affect the economy? How will gun reform affect our ability to protect ourselves? Well, these are the answers that DEI classes and classes on such controversial topics strive to answer. We may be young adults still in school, but we are working on solutions that will benefit everyone. We are, in fact, changing the world and it is because of classes that SB83 targets.

Each generation strives to do better than the last. As humans we are constantly evolving and changing, finding better ways to live and there is nothing wrong with that. It is natural as we learn and discover new things or come to better understandings of what we once knew. We often don't know what change will look like and that uncertainty is difficult to embrace, but if we open up our minds to new ideas, then we can become something truly great.

I want us to become something truly great. I believe in a better, more hopeful future where we have conversations and come to agreements, not screaming matches where nothing is solved. If Senate Bill 83 passes, I won't be able to study in Ohio anymore and this is the same story for many people. I love Ohio and I want to live and work here for the rest of my life. But I can't work against a brick wall that refuses to even open their minds and consider new ideas and a better future, because I am going to be the change we need to see in the world, so is my entire generation, gen z and the generation after that will continue our work. We are moving on towards a better and brighter future and change will come eventually. So my question to you legislators is, will you stand with us or against us?

Either way, change is coming because we are badass believers in human rights. Our toughness is our tenderness. Our strength is in the service of others. There is nothing more fierce than formidable,

unconditional love. There is not a thing more courageous than compassion. But if our belief in equity, empathy, goodness and love do indeed make us “snowflakes”, you should know that winter is coming.

Thank you.