

Hello. My name is Kelsie Spencer, MSW, LSW

I am a social worker living, and working, in Columbus, OH. I am calling to oppose companion bills SB 1 & HB 6. This legislation says it is meant to enhance Ohio's higher education, but instead, it threatens academic freedom by putting too much power into the hands of politicians. To be frank, this is a disguised attempt to pass censorship legislation that only benefits those who intend to do harm to those they vowed to represent fairly.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) **do not** limit intellectual diversity but, by their very nature, increase it by ensuring that everyone has a seat at the table to share and expand perspectives. This bill's banning of DEI will hurt the standing of Ohio's higher education institutions and, more importantly, students. These bans on "controversial topics." also put entire programs at risk.

As a master's level social worker, I am especially concerned about its impact on social work programs' ability to maintain accreditation. Social work program accreditation by CSWE requires content in diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure that social workers can practice effectively with clients of all backgrounds, belief systems, and identities. I am deeply concerned that the passage of this legislation would result in social work programs losing accreditation and thus not allowing social work students to become licensed to offer critical behavioral health services in Ohio.

I urge you to oppose SB 1 & HB 6. Where is your empathy? Why get into politics if your only goal is to make the most money you can, and knowingly hurt the people you are supposed to represent.

This legislation harms children, students, faculty, and the integrity of higher education and puts the social work workforce at risk. Please stand for academic freedom and **vote NO**.

- Kelsie Spencer, MSW, LSW (she/her/hers)