

March 6, 2025

To the Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

My name is Megha Saravanan, and I am a student at The Ohio State University. I am writing to urge legislators to vote against Senate Bill 1, which represents unnecessary government overreach into higher education by restricting curriculum content and imposing ideological constraints on educators. Higher education should be a place for open dialogue and critical thinking. Mandating specific viewpoints in classrooms limits intellectual diversity and weakens Ohio's academic standards.

As an Environmental Policy and Decision Making major, my education at OSU has been based on rigorous scientific research and consensus. Yet, this bill could label my field as controversial and inject politics into my education. My specialization focuses on Environmental and Social Justice, which examines how marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by environmental harm. I worry about the future of my degree if Senate Bill 1 passes. I am paying for my education and taking on debt, and this bill would make it more difficult for me to succeed. I am also concerned that fewer students will choose to attend Ohio's universities if programs are altered. I chose OSU because of the justice-focused aspects of my degree. As a resident of Ohio, I urge you to reject this bill because it does not serve students or the long-term success of Ohio's universities.

I also want to challenge the idea that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs are opposed to meritocracy. DEI exists to foster a sense of community for those who have historically been excluded from higher education. To claim that DEI is unnecessary is to ignore the reality faced by many marginalized groups. I ask the members of this committee to consider Ohio's history and have compassion for those who continue to face systemic barriers.

Higher education prepares students for careers by equipping them with the skills to analyze complex issues. If this bill restricts discussions on social and economic topics, graduates will enter the workforce without the critical thinking abilities that employers value. Businesses seek workers who can engage with diverse perspectives, and this bill would hinder that goal.

Senate Bill 1 threatens the integrity of Ohio's higher education system. It restricts academic freedom, undermines faculty, and lowers the quality of education. I urge this committee to vote against Senate Bill 1 and instead support policies that strengthen Ohio's colleges and universities.