

Kalli Teeters

Higher Education Committee- Senate Bill 1

February 10, 2025

Chair Representative Young, Vice-Chair Representative Ritter, Ranking Member Representative Piccolantonio, and honorable members of the Ohio Workforce and High Education Committee thank you for allowing me to offer my testimony to Senate Bill 1. My name is Kalli Teeters and I am a concerned higher education student and lifelong Ohio resident. I am testifying in regards to Senate Bill 1 and , threatens academic freedom, and puts too much power into the hands of politicians, and has a potential to stunt growth in much needed job fields for the state of Ohio.

I am a senior this year at Ohio University studying social work. I have a minor in psychology, and two certificates in Appalachian Studies and Wealth & Poverty. I have loved my education at my school; it has thoroughly prepared me for a career in social work. I was even accepted this month to the Masters of Social Work program at Ohio University. Additionally, I accepted a graduate position as a survivor advocate for the Survivor Advocacy Program. I hope to work in the mental and behavioral health field, specifically in rural Appalachia Ohio. As we know there is a high level of need for mental and behavioral health specialists especially in these communities. I am looking forward to being able to work in these communities and help combat the shortage of workers.

With this being said, I have read the bill and I have concerns. Ohio implementing a ban and restrictions on “controversial topics” would deter students from attending Ohio schools. As I am graduating in May with many of my peers, we are looking for graduate programs to attend to further our education. Many of my peers were thinking Ohio, and I myself had only applied to Ohio University since it is my intention to stay in rural Ohio for the years to come. However, after the introduction of this bill, many of my peers are looking at out of state schools instead and leaning heavily that way.

As a social work student and soon to be licensed social worker, I am especially concerned about its impact on social work programs' ability to effectively prepare their students to practice with clients of all backgrounds, belief systems, and life experiences. Topics of diversity, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality are essential to a comprehensive social work education and have been central to the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE)

accreditation standards since 1952. Deeming these topics "controversial" and restricting how they can be taught, will water down the integrity of our programs, harm the workforce by deterring students from coming to these Ohio programs, and ultimately, hurting Ohioans.

I urge you to oppose SB 1 & HB 6. Or, at the very least include exemptions for accreditation standards like SB 83 did last year, and as the anti-DEI laws in other states like Florida, Texas, and Alabama have. The legislation harms students, faculty, and the integrity of higher education and puts the social work workforce at risk. Please stand for academic freedom and vote NO. Thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony and hearing my perspective.