

House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

Kathrina Noma
Private Citizen

Members of the higher education committee:

To understand why I'm writing to you today, you must understand my background. I am a proud Filipina American, and the daughter of two immigrants. I'm also a student at The Ohio State University studying to become a lawyer someday. I was born and raised in Westerville, Ohio, and eventually moved to Columbus for high school, and eventually, college. I am the current president of The Women's Network at OSU, an organization that empowers women and supports their professional development. I've accomplished so much in my 3 years at Ohio State, and I'm just getting started. I'm a strong advocate against SB1, and a strong advocate for DEI- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. DEI is not an option. Higher education is deeply rooted in inclusivity- passing this bill would destroy higher education as we know it.

Getting to this point has not been easy. I've fought so hard to get to where I am today. I've been harassed, bullied, and put down by my own peers, but I've continued fighting because I want to make sure girls like me don't ever have to go through this again.

I urge you to put yourselves in my shoes. In the first grade, hair in braids, and your classmates coming up to you asking why your skin is darker than theirs. They're asking me "how come you don't look like us?" Do you understand how confusing that is for a little girl? I've never felt safe in my brown skin and my dark hair. I was ashamed of my Filipina identity for so long. Things like this stick with you and leave you with emotional scars. By erasing DEI, what message does this send to students who look like me? That this behavior is okay? That their emotional turmoil is permitted?

I've experienced the same discrimination at my own university, yet it's still my second home. Ohio State is where I feel safe. I didn't feel safe in my own skin until I came to college. I finally felt like I could express myself freely. I was able to make friends with people who look like me. People who understand me and what I've gone through. By passing this bill, you're taking **away that sense of security**. You're taking away opportunities from people who look like me and taking away student's futures. You're losing the brightest future doctors, lawyers, and professionals by enacting this bill. You're erasing people's stories.

With this, I strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bill 1 and consider my testimony. Please vote NO on this bill before it destroys higher education as we know it.

Thank you.