

Testimony of Darcy Messer
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
March 7th, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Darcy Messer, and as a student in social work, with a focus promoting inclusivity and understanding in communities, I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1, which seeks to remove Diversity, equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives from Ohio's public universities and colleges. These bills attempt to defend and remove DEI efforts not only undermines the progress that has been made in creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments but poses significant harm to marginalized communities. I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

As a social work student, I am learning to work with diverse populations and advocate for social justice. DEI initiatives provide me with the tools and knowledge to approach these tasks effectively. The education I am receiving on cultural competency and intersectionality is indispensable in my development as a future social worker. The removal of DEI would strip me and my peers of the resources we need to understand how to best serve the diverse communities in our state.

Senate Bill 1 threatens to destabilize the very foundation upon which my education is built. Diversity and Inclusivity is not just a "nice to have" concept, it's critical in preparing us to be effective social workers, educators, and healthcare providers as well as leaders like you in our society.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 1 represents a step backward in our collective progress towards a more compassionate and inclusive society. I urge the Ohio Senate to reconsider this bill and to support policies that protect and strengthen DEI efforts in higher education. Removing DEI programs would be detrimental not only to the mental and emotional wellbeing of marginalized students but the future of many careers and the work we do to create a fairer society for all.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this extremely harmful and dangerous bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.