

Chairman Young, Vice Chairman Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gillian Dauer. I am a resident of Ohio and, though testifying on my own behalf, I am also an employee of the University of Cincinnati. I have a Masters degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs from Indiana University-Bloomington, and have worked in higher education for the entirety of my professional career. As such, I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6.

There are many arguments against this bill, and I agree with all of them—the destructive impact to our economy, the public health crisis that will ensue, the threat to freedom of speech via the threat to academic freedom, and more. I am writing today about the bill's impact on the quality of education in Ohio and the intellectual wellbeing of our students.

The bill would prohibit programming, trainings, scholarships, offices committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in institutions of higher education. Diversity helps ALL students. For students who have been historically excluded from higher education, these programs build a sense of belonging on the college campus. They connect students to alumni networks, to campus resources, to mentors. A sense of belonging increases a student's likelihood of graduating tenfold. This is not new information. Research that supports these claims comes from the last six decades. Historical exclusion makes navigating higher education difficult. My job as a higher education professional is to bolster students' navigational capital. It is to level the playing field, and I cannot effectively do that without my campus partners who work in diversity, equity, and inclusion. I cannot keep students enrolled, help them reach graduation, if they are being told explicitly and implicitly that they do not belong.

Additionally, diversity, equity, and inclusion expand the knowledge and intellect of all students, including those who have been historically included in higher education. Without programs promoting DEI, students will not be told the full story. They will only be taught half of the story in their history classes. They will fail to learn how technology and innovation impacts a variety of different people. They will not be taught how to engage in respectful, productive dialogue with business partners across the globe. DEI is necessary to the health of a populace. It is necessary in the education of our future physicians, business leaders, politicians, teachers, engineers, artists, and so on. To strip Ohio students of these opportunities would be detrimental to their future careers. Out-of-state students will choose not to attend our Ohio universities. In-state students will leave Ohio.

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