

Testimony of Amanda L. Ferry, LSW

Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Rep. Tom Young, Chair

March 11, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Amanda L. Ferry. I am a licensed social worker in the State of Ohio. I do not represent any agency or institutions, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I live in Lakewood, Ohio and serve Cuyahoga County. I am writing to oppose companion bills SB 1 & HB 6. This legislation says it is meant to enhance Ohio's higher education education, but instead, it threatens academic freedom by putting too much power into the hands of politicians. Diversity, equity, and inclusion do not limit intellectual diversity but, by their very nature, increase it by ensuring that everyone has a seat at the table to share and expand perspectives. This bill's banning of DEI and restrictions around "controversial topics" will hurt the standing of Ohio's higher education institutions and, more importantly, students. As a 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.

As a MOTHER, I am deeply concerned about the education that my children will receive in the State of Ohio. I have four children, two of which are teenagers. My oldest son is currently attending Cuyahoga Community College and another son who is a junior in high school. Both of my sons would like to attend or continue to attend college in Ohio, however, they will seek education out of state if this bill is passed. Not only will this bill cause an exodus of scholars to seek education out of state, but those who would have come to our state from afar will no longer come. This would be a huge economic loss for the state of Ohio. Additionally, I'd like to add that HUNDREDS of citizens submitted testimony against this bill in the Ohio Senate and it was still passed. THAT IS NOT DEMOCRACY. The will of the people should be the guiding light of our legislature. It is clear that the majority of citizens in the State of Ohio are OPPOSED to this bill. More bills like this one are being introduced everyday, undermining the beauty of acknowledging and celebrating our differences as people and lifting voices that may not be heard in the crowd. This bill will not "enhance" higher

education in the State of Ohio but will instead crush the very meaning of what higher education is.