

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Michelle Kaiser. I have worked in higher education in various capacities for nearly 15 years. I do not represent any institution and submit this testimony as a private citizen. I am strongly opposed to SB 1.

One of the reasons I enjoy being part of the university community is that I get to interact with people from so many different backgrounds with different interests and curiosities. It is a privilege to work with brilliant colleagues from Ohio and all around the world. I observe students who support one another, ask challenging questions, and wrestle with deep and nuanced ideas and experiences. They want to discuss how their experiences relate to their textbooks and assigned readings. They want to discuss current events, learn from experts, engage in campus life, and work together to understand and address global issues.

SB 1 wrongly assumes that only one perspective is represented in university classrooms. In reality, academic spaces are designed for students to engage with peer-reviewed research, challenge ideas, and engage in discussions that reflect diverse viewpoints. Students co-create these learning environments, ensuring that various perspectives are considered, and their experiences are valued.

Our students are committed to making a difference in the world. These students come to campus knowing they are inheriting a world that is facing many challenges and they want to do something about it. They grew up in a world of constant news and misinformation, yet they are driven to learn, grow, and contribute positively to society.

They want to help people with mental health, substance use issues, homelessness, poverty, trauma, inequitable access to health care, educational disparities, and healing from grief and loss. Students want to work for human rights, racial equity, and an economy that is equitable, fair, and supportive of humans and the environment. They are aware of controversies around climate change and climate-related policies. They have witnessed violence and want to engage in academic discourse around these issues.

Our role in higher education is to support them in becoming informed, thoughtful, and globally aware individuals, ready for meaningful careers.

SB1's language around controversial beliefs or policies excludes academic discourse related to immigration, diversity, equity, inclusion, elections, climate, and foreign policies. Limiting these is an infringement on academic freedom and will leave students ill-prepared to be global citizens and academically-prepared to work in many sectors. Furthermore, the language has the added consequence of denying history and silencing voices.

I have the opportunity to be one person in students' lives and academic journeys and see the importance of institutional support for programming that supports Black students, Latine

students, marginalized students, racially minoritized students, LGBTQ+ students, first generation students, and others. SB1 prohibits DEI programs and scholarships which will negatively impact enrollment and the state's economy.

Please vote NO on this harmful bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.