

Testimony of Taliyah Taylor

February 6, 2025

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio and members of the Higher Education Committee.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. My name is Taliyah Taylor, I am queer and a freshman at the University of Cincinnati. As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I am resolutely opposed to Senate Bill 1. I believe this bill will impose negative consequences on education, diversity, and the free exchange of ideas in our state, specifically on campus. While I understand that the bill seeks to address concerns about “controversial” issues in public institutions, I believe that in the end it will undermine the values of academic freedom, inclusivity, and personal expression, important to a thriving democracy.

I believe that one of the most concerning provisions of Senate Bill 1 is its heavy restriction of teaching “controversial” concepts in higher education. Education itself requires the exploration of ideas and topics that can be difficult and sometimes controversial to discuss, but through doing so, as students we are able to develop our critical thinking skills and ability to engage with our surroundings in an informed and attentive way. Who is to say what issues are controversial? As George Santayana once said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” By risking censorship and the suppression of discussions on topics including race, gender, history, and even current events, this bill would deprive us of a well-rounded education, which would prepare us to go out into the real world, full of complexities.

As a commuter student, coming from a family that is very religious, one of the only places that has made me feel like I can openly be myself is the LGBTQ center on campus. During the school day, having somewhere to go and the ability to connect with other individuals through affinity groups, talking about things that we all understand and getting to learn about those who have come before us has helped me feel like I belong. With one of Senate Bill 1’s provisions banning the organization of extracurricular groups by basis of identity in higher education, which would forbid affinity groups from being able to meet, me and many others will miss out on opportunities to have open discussions with our peers on campus and may not have somewhere to go that we feel safe to fully be ourselves.

I urge the committee members to carefully consider the long-term consequences of this legislation and vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Taliyah Taylor
Citizen of Ohio