

Testimony in Opposition of SB 1
Delivered to the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee
Victoria Buckley — Self
March 7, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in opposition to SB1. My name is Victoria Buckley and I have the unique vantage point of considering the impact of SB1 from my roles as an adjunct faculty, staff member and PhD student at an Ohio university. From these perspectives, SB1 will have a significant, negative impact to higher education in the State of Ohio. Although I stand in opposition to all issues in the bill, in this testimony I will focus on why diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are crucial to student success and should remain in Ohio colleges and universities.

As both a staff and faculty member, the removal of diversity, equity and inclusion supports is deeply concerning. A key component of learning and motivation is the ability to contextualize concepts with one's own experiences. This requires students to bring their own identities, cultures and belief systems into curricular and co-curricular activities, and feel welcomed in doing so. Diversity of opinion, race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, ability, etc., is what makes higher education a rich environment for learning. Students and instructors learn and grow with each other in this unique space. This also means, in order to be an effective instructor, I need to be able to respond to the differing needs of my students. This is not reducing rigor, but rather helping students access materials or resources in different ways (such as if they are neurodivergent, or have accessibility needs). In reality, much of this personalization benefits all students, not just those needing an accommodation. Lastly, inclusion is tied to belonging in a community. Research shows that student persistence in higher education is tied to their sense of belonging across academic and social integration¹. Removing the ability for students to bring their whole selves into their studies and preventing staff and faculty from recognizing and supporting the identities students hold is not only demeaning, but it can also accelerate students' departure from Ohio institutions.

From the student perspective, one of the most enjoyable aspects of higher education is getting to know and learn from peers who have come from diverse backgrounds to further their studies. These peers have helped me clarify who I want to be as an educator and the impact I aspire to make in education. Despite having countless options for graduate school, they chose to come here- to the State of Ohio. Their research not only aims to impact education as a whole, but will directly benefit our Ohio students. If SB1 is passed, we will lose these incredibly bright individuals to states that welcome and support their identities as well as their research, which often addresses concerns of equity in education. Beyond the loss to our students who stand to benefit from these research initiatives, this also means a talent drain for Ohio colleges and universities, making our institutions less competitive.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Victoria Buckley

1. Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.