

Testimony of Riley Hudson

Before the House Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

March 8, 2025

Hello and thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Riley Hudson, and I am here to urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

As a student at Kent State University, I am absolutely disgusted and appalled that legislation such as SB1 would even be a topic of conversation. SB1 is spreading misinformation about the purpose of diversity, equity, and inclusion, painting DEI as something we should fear. When in reality, this is far from the truth. DEI is what allows us to work towards a more equitable and liberated future, where ALL are included. SB1 is stating that all should not be welcomed.

I, myself, am a queer woman, but during these scary times, I also think of my fellow peers who hold identities that SB1 is attacking. When I came into college, I was so lost. I had no direction in what I wanted to do in life, and it was hard for me to enter spaces that made me feel safe. This was until I came upon the Women's Center on campus. I have never once walked into a space, and immediately felt like I belonged. Not only as a woman, but as a queer woman trying to explore my individuality. Our Women's Center has done so much for my mental health, my well being, and my safety. But they don't just stop at serving women, they have resources such as free shampoo/conditioner, toothbrushes, warm winter clothing, and more that serves EVERY INDIVIDUAL on campus, regardless of their identity. SB1 is a slap in the face to students with low accessibility, because if passed, these resources would not exist.

Higher education is at risk of changing for the worse, restricting what can be taught in the classroom, restricting access to basic human rights, and restricting students from even entering college. I personally know a ton of students who rely on the DEI scholarships, and if SB1 passes, they'll be forced to drop out. How can someone in power, someone who swore to protect and serve for us, the people, have the audacity to restrict something so basic as education to an entire population of individuals? We have a pretty unique opportunity at Kent State to honor the history that was made from those individuals involved with the May 4th shootings, and those who helped create Black History Month. SB1 is a direct slap in the face to these heroes, and seeks to destroy everything Kent State has worked so hard to obtain, such as inclusivity and activism. I cannot imagine a world without diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and individual freedom for all, and I hope I never have to live to see this reality.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony today. I ask you to take my testimony to heart and vote NO on this bill before it harms the education of Ohioans. I am happy to take any questions you may have.