

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 3/9/25

Name: Claire Borden

Are you representing: **Yourself**  Organization

Organization (If Applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title: Student

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? **Yes**  No

## Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): Senate Bill 1

Specific Issue: Elimination of Diversity Equity and Inclusion

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  **Opponent**  Interested Party

Are you testifying: In-Person  **Written-Only**

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? **Yes**  No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? n/a (written)

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

### Written Testimony Against Senate Bill 1

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking member Piccolantonio and members of the House committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Claire Borden. I am a sophomore at The Ohio State University studying politics, philosophy, and economics. I am writing to oppose Senate Bill 1, particularly the proposed elimination of programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education.

As a lesbian woman, diversity, equity, and inclusion are values that are extremely important to me. Growing up as one of the only queer people that I knew, I dealt with a lot of shame and isolation surrounding my sexuality. Being straight was the default, and same sex attraction was taboo. Nowadays, I am extremely proud of being a lesbian, and I think the change in outlook truly occurred when I found a community of queer people with shared experiences. Diversity, equity, and inclusion policies help to facilitate those community bonds and create safe spaces that ensure that every LGBTQ student feels represented and supported, and it is crucial that these institutional mechanisms are protected.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives were at the forefront of my consciousness during my adolescent years, as I grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and went to Shaker Heights High School. The effect of institutional inequities are very clear in our school district, particularly the high school. Although Shaker is very diverse, it is also very segregated, and has gained national attention for racial disparities in education described as the “achievement gap.” Diversity, equity, and inclusion policies are a constant discussion at Shaker, and they have played a crucial role in attempting to ensure that Black students have the tools they need to succeed. These policies continue to be extremely necessary as the achievement gap persists. Shaker Heights schools only began to desegregate in 1970. It is ludicrous to believe that the prejudice and discrimination that characterized the Jim Crow era disappeared at such a rapid pace that specific and targeted policies are no longer necessary to address the fact that less than 55 years ago Black and white children could not study in the same schools or live in the same neighborhoods. Education without diversity, equity, and inclusion does not promote equality, it reinforces inequality and ensures that another 55 years in the future we will have moved backwards, rather than forwards.

The reason I choose to spell out diversity, equity, and inclusion, rather than abbreviating it to DEI, is so that we can understand and be reminded of the specific values that we are targeting. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not mysterious weapons used to unfairly advantage certain students, they are a way to ensure that those who face systemic barriers, marginalization, and discrimination have the resources they need to thrive and make vital contributions to our academic institutions and society at large. Diversity, equity, and inclusion policies in higher education must be protected, and I urge you as a woman, member of the LGBTQ community, and most importantly a student at an Ohio public university to consider my testimony and vote against Senate Bill 1. Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify against this harmful bill.