

Representative Young,

Hello. My name is Jeremy Deger. I am a Licensed Independent Social Worker Supervisor living in Leetonia, Ohio. I am wishing to testify in written form (as I will not be able to attend to testify) against SB 1. Simply put, the Ohio Senate has already ignored Ohioans who testified about this Bill (over 1000 people). The Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) accreditation requires social workers to have training in DEI. The Ohio Senators who voted for this and House members who support it are putting Ohio social workers at risk if this passes. This is ignoring an educational discipline in our colleges and delegitimizing my field of practice. We need these ethics to do our jobs.

This legislation says it is meant to enhance Ohio's higher education education, but instead, it threatens academic freedom by putting too much power into the hands of politicians.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion do not limit intellectual diversity but, by their very nature, increase it by ensuring that everyone has a seat at the table to share and expand perspectives. This bill's banning of DEI and restrictions around "controversial topics" will hurt the standing of Ohio's higher education institutions and, more importantly, students.

As a social worker I am especially concerned about its impact on social work programs' ability to effectively prepare their students to practice with clients of all backgrounds, belief systems, and life experiences. Topics of diversity, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality are essential to a comprehensive social work education and have been central to the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) accreditation standards since 1952. Deeming these topics "controversial" and restricting how they can be taught, will water down the integrity of our programs, harm the workforce by deterring students from coming to these Ohio programs, and ultimately, hurting Ohioans.

I urge you to oppose SB 1. Or, at the very least, include an exemption for accreditation standards like SB 83 did last year, and as the anti-DEI laws in other states like Florida, Texas, and Alabama have. This legislation harms students, faculty, and the integrity of higher education and puts the social work workforce at risk. Please stand for academic freedom and vote NO.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jeremy Deger MSW, LISW-S