

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Katie Monthie, and I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

I have been a graduate student in Ohio for almost six years. I moved to Athens in 2019 to pursue my masters in English at Ohio University, and during that time fell so in love with this state that I decided to go to the University of Cincinnati to pursue my PhD in the same subject. I am in my 4th year of my PhD now. In my program, I study cultural rhetoric—a subject that, given how this bill discusses diversity, would not be able to be studied in the event that it passes. I also teach writing, and in those classes try to emphasize to my students the value of engaging critically with diverse perspectives. I do this through academic sources of course, but also by having students talk with each other about their differing opinions and encouraging them to see how rhetoric exists all around them. There is no avoiding ‘controversial topics’ as defined in this bill in classes like mine, whether we are talking about how bias shows up in an academic source, how we use writing to place ourselves in the word, or how a Taylor Swift or Beyonce song has the ability to make us feel things.

During my time as a graduate student in Ohio, I have seen multiple iterations of this bill be tossed around, and there is something key about them that is always the same. This bill is hypocritical, showing a fundamental misunderstanding of what higher education is and how DEI functions within it. You cannot tell your universities that you want them to encourage diverse thought while censoring the ideas that students and educators discuss in the classroom. As Senator Catherine D. Ingram has stated, this bill does not work to foster a learning environment, rather it “sets to impose ideological conformity, limiting academic freedom and the true potential of our institutions” (“Ingram Condemns Introduction of Senate Bill 1”). However, what upsets me the most about this bill is that if it were to pass, I could not stay and teach in Ohio. I love Cincinnati; it has become my home over the past four years, and it is nearly impossible to imagine living anywhere else. That said, this bill would make teaching at the collegiate level in Ohio untenable, due to the limitations it places on speech, and the ridiculous adjustments it makes to professor’s rights to organize and advocate for what they, as professionals, need. I would love to be able to continue my scholarship and teaching in Ohio, in service of helping future Ohio students to reach their potential as writers. If given the restrictions in this bill, I know I could not.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.