

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

My name is Cynthia Tancer, and I have spent many years working for equitable educational opportunities for all students in Ohio. I stand firmly against Senate Bill 1 because it undermines the fundamental principles of academic freedom, inclusion, and critical thinking—principles that are essential to a thriving democracy and a competitive workforce.

This bill's attack on DEI programs is not just an attack on higher education—it is an attack on the values of fairness and opportunity that should define our state. By restricting how universities address diversity and banning faculty from engaging with so-called "controversial" topics, this bill ensures that students will be less prepared to engage with the realities of the world. Furthermore, tying university funding to ideological compliance is an attempt to force institutions into political submission.

Beyond the immediate harm to our universities, the long-term consequences of this culture of exclusion are clear: Ohio is becoming a less desirable place for young people to study, work, and build their futures. Why would the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals choose to stay in or return to a state that actively stifles diverse perspectives and critical thought? The best and brightest will leave, and fewer will come back. That is a crisis of our own making.

This is not how we build a strong, inclusive, and forward-thinking Ohio. I implore this committee to listen to the voices of students, educators, and community members and to reject this dangerous legislation before it does irreversible damage to our state.