

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1
House Committee on Higher Education
3/8/2025

Nurah Baseer

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee, I share my deep concerns as a board member of the Muslim Student Association (MSA) at The Ohio State University regarding Senate Bill 1. I believe this bill raises significant issues that could negatively impact the educational experience for students like me, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. As a Muslim student and student organization leader, I feel compelled to express my concerns about the impact this bill might have on the inclusivity of our academic environment.

This bill's restriction on mandatory Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and training raises red flags for me as a student who values the importance of understanding and appreciating diverse perspectives. These programs play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive atmosphere, allowing students from various backgrounds, including those of different faiths, to feel heard and respected.

Throughout my years as a leader in MSA, I have witnessed the ways in which the organization builds community for students, bringing them together and providing an environment that is supportive to their faith. The sense of belonging and value that students feel in spaces that allow them to bring their whole selves truly enhances their academic experience. I am confident that the same is true for students of diverse backgrounds and other religions. The prohibitions that this bill places around DEI conversations appear to be the first step in restricting organizations such as MSA that encourage students to embrace their differences and that advocate for their success. Allowing such a bill to pass could force an end to organizations that many students call home on campus.

While the bill claims to enhance higher education, the administrative burdens it introduces may divert resources away from academic programs. As a Muslim student, I am concerned that such administrative constraints might limit our ability to offer diverse courses that explore various cultural and religious perspectives, enriching the educational experience for all students. Like many other students, I highly value the ability to broaden my perspectives by attending and learning in a space where diverse thought thrives. I am concerned that this bill will impose major limits on that ability.

As someone committed to my education and the well-being of Ohio's student community, I worry that SB 1 could create an environment that is less welcoming for students of diverse backgrounds, including those of the Muslim faith. The potential shift of resources away from the student and learning towards bureaucratic compliance may inadvertently marginalize students who seek a more inclusive and diverse educational experience. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no on the bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.