

# Ohio house members

Today I ask each of you, representatives of the people, to take a moment and exit your bubble. To take pause recognize the bubble and exit. Your bubble of partisanship, exclusion, possibly privilege. Exit and open yourself up to hear the words of the people that have shown up today to be heard, all of them, including those like myself that had to write instead due to other obligations that we could not leave, like caring for patients.

I fear for the future of not only my own children but the future of all children in our state when I read this bill; it is a closing of the mind, not an opening.

I believe that there is one major assumption being made or being shoved into our minds with regard to the phrase DEI. Diversity, equity, and inclusion. For many this seems to have been dubbed the phrase for giving people of poor merit undeserved opportunities, and the main theme seems to be that primarily people of color are the only ones that stem to benefit from these programs.

Please look again at this term and define it well within the bill. DEI for me, in my own life experience has provided opportunity for not only brown people but; people of all colors, origins, backgrounds, sexual orientations. The key is variety, exposure, inclusivity. I have seen people from Appalachia, poor, single parent families, brown, black, and white benefit from these programs providing opportunities to those who are all too often excluded, not provided a seat at the table, primarily because they were not born into "merit." How does one gain merit if the opportunities to attain that merit are unequal from the start?

I ask you to exit your bubble, look at where your education began. Did you come from a home with both parents, was higher education encouraged, a stable home, steady meals on the table, a private school education, did you have SAT prep, did people look at you and tell you that you could be anything you dreamed of and actually meant it? If so, think of the people who did not share in your experience, and how hard they had to work to be seen, included, even thought of as achieving anything beyond their humble beginnings. They dared to dream and on top of that, they put in the work to attain their goals. Alternatively, let's say you are with the people and arose from humble beginnings, then I ask you to remember those times, remember your own struggle.

These programs help people that have struggled and yet managed to overcome, they offer a seat at the table to then show their merit that so many do not believe they possess. If you have felt excluded by these programs, then I am sorry. However, the exclusion you may have felt cannot be a side effect of

inclusion by its very definition, perhaps you have always been included as the default, by birth into a good situation and have not been able to take a moment to notice.

The teachers of this state have my full support. They too are stifled by this bill. The work they do is invaluable and all too often undervalued. It leaves me in awe that teachers and professors continue to teach and students continue to enroll to learn to teach in spite of how poorly our country values them. No part in this bill regarding teachers should be passed. The right to strike is a tool to ensure that they are treated well and obtain the very minimum of what they deserve for the work they do, if negotiations are inadequate then strikes are inevitable. Perhaps focus more on providing your educators with basic necessities and reasonable requests to avoid the last resort of strike rather than removing their right to a key negotiating tool completely.

In closing, if in reading my testimony, in defense of educators and all underprivileged peoples of all colors of the rainbow including the poor of Appalachia, and X for those who I have failed to mention who are often not included in the minority too; if you have assumed today or any other day that a black woman like me is unlikely to be a physician full of merit, serving the people of her community, then I again remind you to recognize your bubble, your bias. It is that bubble that creates the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion. I implore you all to make eye contact with each and every speaker that has taken the time to come here today, they are real people with lives beyond your hallowed halls of pomp and circumstance. Come to all of our tables and listen. I have children, I have a job, I don't have much free time. I felt the time and effort to write this was necessary. I do not read the words in this bill and take them lightly. Certainly words are simple type on paper, it is the actions behind them in passing such a bill that speak volumes.

Candace Potter, MD