

Good morning Chairman Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 1.

I am a first year Computer Science student at The Ohio State University, and I have many career goals, but I hope to use my degree to innovate new and exciting technologies in the realm of AI.

One thing that I've learned throughout my first year in college is the importance of equal opportunity. But when I look around during my programming or math classes, that's not what I see.

I am often one of a handful of women in a room full of dozens, or even hundreds, of people. The buildings that host my classes sometimes only have one or two women's restrooms, and my instructors for these courses are all male.

Senate Bill 1, despite its intended purpose, would make it harder for student groups like the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) or the Association of Women in Computing (ACM-W) to operate on campus. These organizations ensure that everyone pursuing a degree in engineering or technology feels supported while on campus, while maintaining partnerships with big Ohio employers like JPMorgan Chase to ensure that students have ample access to opportunities post-graduation.

It should be the responsibility of Ohio's universities to grant everyone, no matter their gender, sexuality, or race, the ability to pursue a degree. Senate Bill 1, while promising to uphold these principles, in reality will diminish opportunities, kill important programs, and put organizations like (SWE) or (ACM-W) in a legal gray area that universities will most likely not be willing to navigate.

The services provided to students by SWE and ACM-W have been invaluable in helping women to break into the tech industry, while affirming all students in their abilities to pursue degrees in STEM.

These issues are not unique to STEM fields: Ohio's universities don't have a diversity of thought problem, they have a diversity problem. If efforts to recruit stellar faculty and students from across the country are forced to come to a halt due to this Bill, then this problem will only get worse, and that talent will go elsewhere in search of a more supportive environment.

This means that Ohio's brightest students, that would have otherwise been recruited by scholarships, special programs, or professional opportunities, will pour into surrounding states in an aptly named "brain drain."

In order for Ohio to maintain economically competitive, it requires a well-educated workforce. Ohio's public colleges and universities produce many of these workers in fields from tech to teaching, but these institutions' abilities to retain this future workforce is under threat by this Bill.

It is because of this reason that I urge the committee to reconsider the validity of Senate Bill 1's promise, and to listen to those who this bill will directly affect; the students. It is a fact that 90% of students at Ohio State University surveyed by our Undergraduate Student Government do not want Senate Bill 1.

Help us support every Ohio student, uplift Ohio's economy, and pursue an equal future by opposing this Bill.

Students call on you to keep Ohio competitive.