

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Eryn Bostwick. I am a born and raised Ohioan, a first-generation college student, and a well-loved instructor at two institutions of higher education in Northeast Ohio. I am strongly opposed to SB1 and its companion bill, HB6, for many reasons.

The first is that over the years I have gotten to know many students who were not dealt easy hands in life. One that missed class because her mother was arrested, and she had to take care of her little sister. Another that never liked school and felt like teachers did not always believe in him. Another that struggled immensely due to a tense family situation and some developmental disabilities. All these students graduated, but likely would not have had it not been for programs like the ones this bill seeks to eliminate. Importantly, it was not just the school programs that helped them succeed—it was the sense of connection they felt with me when we would discuss things that related to their lives and their experiences in the classroom; discussions this bill seeks to limit. Through class discussions I made them feel seen and respected, and many have told me that helped them persevere.

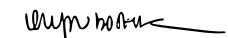
The second is that, as a first-generation college student I know how important these programs are on a personal level. While many automatically think about race and gender when considering this bill, the reality is many other people are helped by DEI-related programs, including first-gen students like me. Others include veterans, those with disabilities, expectant mothers, adult learners, etc. As an instructor I have attended workshops to help build my understanding of the needs of many different types of students, including those listed above, so my classroom can be a more welcoming place for them—a place where they feel comfortable and ready to learn. Like the students I mentioned above, often these people are just trying to do what they can to improve their lives and the lives of their families—to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, so to speak. I know that's what I have spent my professional life doing. I worry that this bill would not only eliminate important programs meant to help students like these, but the wonderful workshops I have had the ability to attend and that have had a direct, positive impact on my 100s of students over the years.

Lastly, I am concerned about the economic impact the passage of this bill would have on the state of Ohio. During opposition testimony in the Senate many students vowed to leave Ohio if this bill passed, and there is no doubt in my mind faculty will as well. In fact, I left a tenure-track job in Texas to come back to Ohio and work two part-time jobs so that I could escape the restrictive policies there. I love Ohio and want to stay here forever, but I also want to be trusted to do my job and be able to care for my students. Losses like these would cause a domino effect, first resulting in less enrollment at colleges, which could lead to some colleges closing and fewer skilled workers in our state as many seek opportunity elsewhere. I know Governor Dewine has commented about the desire to attract more young talent to Ohio, and I fear this bill would have the opposite effect. We need to do what we can to create more jobs and encourage more people to want to move to our great state, not pass legislation that keeps them away.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,



Eryn Bostwick
Concerned Ohioan