

Testimony of Dr. Leah Rubinsky
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Leah Rubinsky, and I am a professor of Composition in the English Department at the University of Cincinnati where I have taught for two years. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I am writing because I am deeply alarmed by Senate Bill 1 and its mandate that we remove diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives from our higher education institutions across the state of Ohio. DEI initiatives are crucial because they provide opportunities, funding, support and a sense of belonging for students who have been traditionally excluded from higher education spaces. Just the other day I had a student come to my office hours and tell me how scared he was that he might lose his scholarship if SB1 passes. This scholarship, he told me, is the only way that college would be possible for someone in his socioeconomic situation. I believe that college should be accessible for everyone. DEI initiatives help make this accessibility a reality.

Beyond the importance of DEI, I also write to shed some light on what we, as university faculty, do in terms of teaching. There seems to be some confusion because if one were to believe the authors of SB1, it would seem as though professors have some sort of nefarious agenda when it comes to teaching. I am referring to the section of SB1 mandating that, "...faculty and staff will allow and encourage students to reach their own conclusions about all controversial beliefs or policies and will not seek to indoctrinate any social, political, or religious point of view." *We already do this.* As a professor who teaches critical writing, reading and academic research skills, the most important thing that I do is teaching students to think for themselves. I do this by teaching students how to thoroughly vet sources, craft robust, evidence-based arguments and engage in respectful, rhetorical listening. I don't care what particular arguments my students are making so much as whether they are making them using peer-reviewed evidence and sound reasoning.

I find it ironic that SB1 instructs university faculty and staff to not "indoctrinate" students with a particular point of view while at the same time forcing all of us on college campuses to abide by a particular point of view that does not understand the need for DEI policies. Unlike the authors of SB1, our students are not afraid of engaging difficult truths, such as thinking about how structural racism impacts our day-to-day lives. Our students are not threatened by

examining issues of power and privilege. And our students are not afraid to widen the circle of inclusivity at our institutions. Unfortunately, some of our state lawmakers are.