

House Workforce & Higher Education Committee
Ohio Senate Bill 1
Opponent Testimony
March 11, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Crystal Nacolle Dunivant, and I have been a licensed social worker and mental health professional in Ohio for over two decades. I am writing to you today as a private citizen to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1 and its companion bill House Bill 6.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are essential components of a thriving intellectual environment. DEI initiatives do not limit intellectual diversity; they enhance it by ensuring that all voices are heard, and all perspectives are considered. Banning DEI initiatives and restricting the discussion of certain topics will harm Ohio's higher education institutions and, most importantly, their students.

As a social worker, I am particularly concerned about the impact that SB 1 will have on social work education. Topics such as diversity, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality are fundamental to social work practice, and they have been central to the Council on Social Work Education's accreditation standards for over 70 years. Restricting the teaching of these topics will diminish the quality of social work education in Ohio and deter students from pursuing social work careers in our state.

Ohio is already facing a severe shortage of behavioral health professionals. According to the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), the demand for behavioral health services increased by an average of 29% per year between 2013 and 2019. The report, Behavioral Health in Ohio, highlights a 2016 publication by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that identified worker shortages as a key challenge for meeting the nationwide demand for behavioral health services. The report continues that as of September 2022, only 30% of Ohioans within HRSA's Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas have had their behavioral health needs met. Restricting social work education will only worsen this shortage and lead to adverse outcomes for Ohioans in need of mental health care.

I urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 1. This legislation will harm students, faculty, and the integrity of higher education in Ohio. It will also put the social work workforce at risk and jeopardize the well-being of countless Ohioans.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

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