

**Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1**  
**Committee of Workforce and Higher Education**  
**March 9, 2025**

**Zuzanna Sokolowski**  
**Student at the University of Cincinnati**

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Zuzanna Sokolowski and I am a second year student at the University of Cincinnati. I oppose Senate Bill 1 because I believe it threatens the first amendment rights to the freedom of speech and academic freedom of both my fellow students, faculty, and myself.

I strongly believe that the restriction of any knowledge or education does not benefit anyone, especially students. Our society is built on a foundation of teaching children in schools from a young age, giving them strong backgrounds in history and science, math and english, so they can grow up with critical thinking and be able to form their own thoughts and opinions. This spirit of rigorous education and accurate teaching of history and fact is also present at the University of Cincinnati. Senate Bill 1 seeks to prohibit teaching of topics deemed “politically controversial” in any ways that can influence how a student forms their own perspective, which although sounds fine, is actually worded in a way that would not allow educators to teach an event as horrifying as the Holocaust as a factual historical event to a student who believes it never happened. Topics should be taught as they factually occurred, regardless of political controversy. If anything, restricting education for political reasons is the exact opposite of the spirit of the First Amendment and academic freedom.

As well as strongly disagreeing with the restriction of topics that can be taught freely, I also believe the elimination of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts on college campuses in Ohio would be extremely detrimental to higher education. I believe from a logical standpoint that any effort to include more diverse and varied perspectives in conversations is automatically more enriching intellectually and culturally to students than their absence. I have never encountered an instance in my time at the University of Cincinnati where Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts have been detrimental to my education, nor have I heard this from any of my peers. I strongly believe any effort to acknowledge, include, and listen to those with varied experiences strengthens any educational institution.

I was neither born nor raised in Ohio but I came to the University of Cincinnati to pursue my degree because I was awarded a full merit scholarship and I admired the academic programs offered. I believe that I was awarded this scholarship because my university thought I would help contribute to the university, community, and the state of Ohio positively both during school and

after graduation. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and have enjoyed my time here. But if Senate Bill 1 is passed, higher education in Ohio will no longer be respectable or upstanding. Students such as myself, who don't necessarily have any reason to come to Ohio besides a merit scholarship, will think twice about committing, and would gladly go to a more respectable educational institution in another state. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no on Senate Bill 1.

Thank you