

Testimony of Alessia Vaughn

Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Rep. Tom Young, Chair

March 9, 2025

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

My name is Alessia Vaughn, and this is my written testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1 (S.B. 1). I am a current fourth-year undergraduate student at the University of Cincinnati, going on to pursue a master's degree this fall. I am also planning to obtain a doctorate and become a university professor. My dedication to higher education is unquestionable, and as such I am deeply disturbed by the horrific repercussions S.B. 1 will have on our educational system if the bill passes.

The name of this bill, Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act, is a cruel irony which in fact does the opposite of what it claims to. S.B. 1, if passed, would push back Ohio higher education by almost half a century, making it clear to the rest of the world that they should avoid pursuing higher education here. It will devastate Ohio's education system for decades, hurting not just students and those employed, but the entire state economy which relies immensely on the profit and prestige our universities provide.

S.B. 1 is in direct opposition to the majority of Ohio citizens whose voices this bill's proponents are actively attempting to silence. From the erasure of Ohio students' voting rights on boards which decide their futures, to banning diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, S.B. 1 proves it is not interested in protecting or uplifting Ohio higher education in any way. To classify DEI as exclusionary as most of its proponents are suggesting, is absurd and rooted in white

supremacy and bigotry. What would our universities look like without foundational programs committed to diversity, equity and inclusion? That is a terrifying picture which no decent human being should ever desire as our future. The strength of our universities is solely contingent on the strength of its students. DEI initiatives support all students, building their strength through community, representation, richer curriculums, and countless other positive impacts.

I have lived in Ohio for almost my entire life and unfortunately will be forced to move elsewhere, as I know many others will, if Senate Bill 1 is passed. My future and those of my fellow hundreds of thousands of Ohio university students, will be effectively destroyed by S.B 1. I plead for this committee to not turn their backs on Ohio citizens, and to stand on the right side of history by voting no on Senate Bill 1.