

Testimony of Sarah E. Jones, Ph.D.
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 Dr. Sarah Jones, and I am a professor of organizational communication at Ohio University – Athens, where I have taught for six years. I do not represent Ohio University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

I urge the committee to REJECT Senate Bill 1 (SB1).

In their recent opinion piece for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jeffrey Aaron Snyder argued in their hat voluntary affinity groups (an important outcome of DEI “efforts”) are an American tradition, not a form of segregation. “Nearly 200 years ago,” Snyder wrote, “Alexis de Tocqueville marveled at the propensity of Americans ‘of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions’ to form voluntary associations. Indeed, he regarded the free pursuit of a common interest among like-minded citizens as key to the survival of our democracy.” He went on to reiterate that the “purpose of voluntary associations runs the gamut, from banding together to promote social justice... to convening for fun and recreation.” Doing so allows us to engage in “camaraderie, cooperation, dialogue, deliberation, negotiation, competition, creativity, and the kinds of self-expression and self-sacrifice that are possible only in association with others.” SB1 not only fails to consider the many benefits of free association; it also advance a profoundly misguided view of what constitutes discrimination.

To quote another—Gary Daniels of the ACLU—“To support SB 1... is an invitation to chaos, confusion, and First Amendment violations on all our campuses.” Indeed, the ban on so-called DEI efforts in SB1 contains no definition of “diversity, equity, and inclusion,” and ignores the fact that racial quotas are already illegal; that, DEI “efforts” benefit our campuses. The micromanaging of individual courses and instructors would also severely harm our ability to properly serve or care for our students--to guide them to be self-directed learners willing to engage in dialogue across positions, without checking their passion at the door.

Again, I urge the committee to REJECT Senate Bill 1 (SB1).