

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Ellen Thomas, I am a lifelong resident of Ohio and I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

Jerry Cirino is quoted to have said: *"We need to treat our institutions of higher learning a little bit more like a business."* This is something I've heard often in politics; phrases like "we need to run this country like a business." I ask you to consider why. Why must business and profit be at the forefront of every public institution? Who benefits from this? Cirino is also quoted to have said that, *"higher education, all postsecondary education, is absolutely critical to us in Ohio if we're going to maintain a strong economy in the future and meet the workforce requirements that we need to meet in order to employ people and to provide the workers that our companies are looking for."* That's fair. I agree that postsecondary education is important. But it sounds like his belief is that the sole purpose of higher education is to provide workers for businesses and corporations. What are these businesses and corporations actually doing though? Are they serving the people? Are they paying their workers a living wage? Or are they going about business as usual, cutting costs at every opportunity to maximize profit for their CEOs and shareholders? Regardless of the rampant wealth disparity in many US corporations today, to many, myself included, higher education provides much more than that. It is a shared space for meaningful conversations that transcend cultural and socio-economic differences and defies borders. It is a public place where professors and students alike can come together to study history, sciences, literature and art; This is the very meaning of culture, what makes us human, and what enables us to expand our horizons and learn from each other. Banning diversity and inclusion efforts from higher education robs us of that. It robs us of the critical thinking and empathy required to resolve interpersonal and world conflict. It robs us of the opportunity to expand our minds beyond our small zones of interest and see our world for the true beauty it has to offer.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill. Please don't limit public secondary education to all but your economic interests. We need diversity and inclusion more than ever.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.