

## Testimony of Kandace McConnell

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, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Kandace McConnell and I am a student at The Ohio State University. While I cannot speak on the behalf of all undergraduate students, I can express my view on this proposed bill and how I think it will irrevocably damage the principle of higher education. I believe education is an integral foundation in a student's later pursuits of knowledge and how they engage with citizenship as an American. The foundation of democracy is civil discourse and fostering the ability to share opposing views and discuss them as citizens. Sec. 3345.0217 of this bill specifically prohibits students from engaging with “controversial concepts” in schools which is the ideal location to nuance the discussion and foster a growth mindset. By infringing on this opportunity for students to learn you are effectively handicapping their ability to articulate their ideas civilly and understand their peers. Additionally the ideas considered “controversial” are especially worrying since climate change, foreign policy, and D.E.I. are all pressing topics commonly misunderstood and misconstrued that causes further divide between people. Why would we willingly pass a bill made to divide us? When did higher education switch from informative to hurtful? Currently on The Ohio State Campus there are professors fearing whether or not they will be out of a job as the administration sunsetted programs, students debating whether to stay at Ohio State depending on if their major has too many “controversial topics” in courses, there are students who feel unwelcome on campus because the department they felt most welcomed in was sunsetted( Student Life’s Center for Belonging and Social Change) because it was too closely related to D.E.I. I do not believe these changes were made in the interest of higher education. I believe these changes were made to separate and impede us from advocating for our communities.

Our society is nothing if not for the future we foster, is this the future we want? As a student seeking higher education, a citizen committed to civil discourse, and an American devoted to democracy, I say no and I hope you do too. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony today. I ask you to heed my testimony and vote no on this bill before it harms the education of Ohioans. Thank you again for accepting this written testimony.