

Testimony of Code Beschler
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

Good morning. Thank you Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee for allowing me to testify today. My name is Code Beschler, and I am here to urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

I am an undergraduate student at The Ohio State University, but I do not represent Ohio State. Rather I am submitting testimony as a private citizen and a concerned parent of a student in Ohio schools. I would like to specifically focus on SB1's impact on disabled Ohioans, disabled students, and our medical care.

I am a disabled and parenting student at Ohio State, studying anthropology with a focus on public health, disability studies, and accessibility. I moved to Ohio for the robust support networks here, the highly-rated public schools for my child, and the strong commitment to diversity at The Ohio State University. Ohio has become my home, a place where I am proud to be, and I have dedicated my research to creating better access, public health, and community here. I planned for my child to follow in my footsteps in becoming a proud Buckeye, but the passing of SB1 would rewrite this story, pushing me, my research, and my family elsewhere.

In 2019, Governor DeWine declared Ohio to be a Disability Inclusion State. This sparked the development of Accessible Ohio, an initiative focused specifically on increasing access for people with disabilities. I attended their first conference last July, hearing from inspiring speakers and programs aimed at making Ohio the heart of accessibility. How can we live up to this promise of disability inclusion while eliminating programs supporting disabled students at the college level? How can we claim disability inclusivity when we fail to support marginalized populations – groups with an increased chance of disability caused by structural violence? How can our medical system provide quality care to disabled Ohioans when medical students are barred from learning the well-documented health disparities across racial, gender, and class lines?

As a student, I have benefitted immensely from parenting student resources at OSU's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and disability-focused community groups at the Center for Belonging

and Social Change. I have become a better advocate for myself and others through the rigorous discussion of “controversial topics” in my classrooms. My public health research is improved by the diverse perspectives of people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, and women. In fact, the disability justice movement is spearheaded by queer, disabled women and femmes of color, demonstrating the immense value and power of these voices.

Senate Bill 1 claims to promote intellectual diversity, allowing for all students to come to their own conclusions. However, some conclusions simply should not be acceptable in a medical or classroom setting. For example, a fellow student once endorsed the opinion that “disabled people should just die.” Does SB1 require my professor to meaningfully and positively engage with opinions that promote eugenics? Do you consider it acceptable for me to endure a discussion ultimately advocating for my own death?

Senate Bill 1 is an attack on higher education, medical care, and ultimately, the disabled community. I ask you to take my testimony to heart and vote NO on this bill. Thank you for listening to my testimony today, and I am happy to take any questions you may have.