

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1 – Written-Only
House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
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Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 1 and its companion bill House Bill 6.

My name is Elizabeth Katavich (she/her), and I am Lead Advocacy Coordinator with the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland. For nearly fifty years, the Center has been a cornerstone of support, advocacy, and community-building for LGBTQ+ individuals in the Greater Cleveland region. At the heart of our work is a commitment to creating safe spaces, advancing equity, and providing the resources and support necessary for our community to flourish and thrive.

SB 1 represents a direct assault on our efforts and the rights of marginalized communities, particularly LGBTQ+ students. This bill reflects an Orwellian vision of censorship that undermines academic freedom and jeopardizes the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable groups.

The bill's sweeping attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs would strip away vital resources that provide LGBTQ+ students with the support they desperately need. DEI programs are essential for students who have historically been excluded or oppressed. These programs give LGBTQ+ students affirming networks, access to scholarships, and a sense of belonging. SB 1 seeks to erase these spaces, where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe, seen, and supported. This isn't a simple shift in policy – this is a deliberate attempt to erase the opportunities for our most vulnerable to succeed.

SB 1 directly undermines LGBTQ+ students' ability to see themselves reflected in their education. By banning discussions on so-called "controversial" topics like marriage equality and reproductive rights, the bill targets fields of study that have made campuses more inclusive and supportive. This would erase crucial resources for LGBTQ+ students, strip protections for LGBTQ+ faculty, and hinder research on LGBTQ+ health disparities—making it even harder to address the specific challenges our community faces.

The bill frames educators as untrustworthy figures, claiming that faculty cannot "indoctrinate" students on political or social issues. In reality, educators are dedicated professionals who teach students to think critically, engage with diverse perspectives, and understand a complex society. If SB 1 passes, educators will be forced to self-censor or risk retaliation, silencing discussions of systemic discrimination, public health disparities, and historical truths. This would set a chilling precedent, where truth itself becomes controversial, and students can reject facts knowing institutions have no power to correct them.

We are at a pivotal moment when the rights of LGBTQ+ students are under attack and their visibility and representation are being systematically erased. As with previous harmful legislation, SB 1 seeks to dismantle the systems that provide LGBTQ+ students with safety, opportunity, and hope.

I urge you to reject this bill and stand with Ohio's students, educators, and diverse communities. Our students deserve learning environments where their identities are respected and where education is rooted in truth and free from censorship. SB 1 poses a direct threat to our community, and if we are committed to making Ohio a place where all students can thrive, opposing this bill is the only reasonable course of action.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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