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House Workforce & Higher Education Committee

Chair Young

Opposition Testimony for Senate Bill 1

March 11, 2025

Written Testimony

Submitted by Tamara Howard

Director of Advocacy, YWCA Columbus

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer opponent testimony to Senate Bill 1 and its companion House Bill 6. My name is Tamara Howard, and I serve as the Director of Advocacy for the YWCA Columbus.

The YWCA Columbus remains unwavering in our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, recognizing these as the cornerstone of resilience and opportunity. This commitment enables us to better serve our community and drive growth and success for all involved, ensuring a brighter and more inclusive future for the community and residents we serve.

Our mission is to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We defy the status quo that puts women, people of color, and the marginalized on unequal footing. By providing practical resources and educating our community, we promote empowerment and inclusion. We are dedicated to nurturing the potential of our youth, ensuring that with each new generation, we become more enlightened, compassionate, and inclusive.

Senate Bill 1 is detrimental to students, higher education, and the future of Ohio. By dismantling DEI initiatives, this bill undermines the core principles of inclusive and equitable education. It suppresses the free exchange of ideas, stifles innovation, and degrades the quality of education that Ohioans rightfully deserve. As an organization dedicated to justice and equity, YWCA Columbus opposes any legislation that threatens these values.

Rejecting Senate Bill 1 is not merely about preserving DEI efforts; it is about protecting the future of our students, our universities, and our state. Ohio is grappling with a significant challenge in attracting and retaining its top talent, as many students opt to pursue higher education elsewhere. A recent study found that Ohio ranks 18th nationwide in retaining its college graduates, with a net loss of 12.2% when comparing college grads living in Ohio to those produced in Ohio^[1].

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While we see DEI initiatives as a virtue worth embracing, legislation designed to stifle these efforts signals to many that Ohio is not progressing. Consequently, they take their skills, talents, and economic potential elsewhere.

At a time when students are making life-altering financial decisions, weakening DEI initiatives across Ohio universities is a strategic misstep for both businesses and student life. DEI resources are not just a peripheral consideration; they are a priority for many students. In fact, 75% of college students support DEI initiatives on campuses and believe they are crucial for fostering an inclusive environment^[2]. Higher education represents one of the most significant investments of their lives, and students are more likely to choose institutions that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In conclusion, the passage of Senate Bill 1 would not only harm our educational institutions but also jeopardize the future of Ohio. YWCA Columbus opposes this bill because it contradicts our mission and the values we stand for. We must stand together to protect the values that make our state strong and vibrant. We ask the committee to reject this legislation and recommit to building a future where diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of our educational system.

Thank you,

Tamara Howard, Director of Advocacy
YWCA Columbus

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[1] [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace - Pew Research Center](#)

[2] [70+ Diversity and Inclusion \(DEI\) Statistics in the Workplace](#)