

Hello, my name is Mesgana Mekibib and I would like to speak as an opponent to Senate Bill 1, which seeks to oppose diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts in Ohio colleges.

First off, I would like to say that I completely agree that merit is what people should be judged on. In an ideal world, this would absolutely be the case. But the reason DEI efforts were put in place was to even out the playing field so that we can *truly* judge based on merit. It is to ensure that the minority student with high qualifications is equally considered along with a white student with similar qualifications.

In addition, restricting certain topics from being taught in school defeats the whole purpose of education. Education is about knowledge, no matter what that knowledge is. History is history, and will always exist. The restriction of this enforces that you do not have the best interest of students; you want students to only learn what *you* want them to know. Therefore, this bill goes against education itself.

Finally, I would like to mention the harmful impact that this legislature has on students all throughout Ohio. I know many students who are scared of losing their scholarships.

Communities such as cultural centers and LGBTQ+ centers have existed for decades, uplifting minority groups to reach their true potential, and your willingness to dismantle them rings loud and clear the decade that you want us to return to. We do not want to go back.

I urge you to be on the right side of history and vote **no** on Senate Bill 1.