

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, and members of the Higher Ed committee,

Good [morning/afternoon],

My name is Brielle Shorter, and I am a junior at The Ohio State University. I am here today to strongly oppose SB1, a bill that will make higher education less safe, less inclusive, and less honest.

My time at OSU has not been easy. I have sat alone in class, been called a monkey while walking on campus, and felt the unspoken hostility of being Black in spaces not built for me. Before I even stepped foot on campus, and I submitted my application to the institution I saw a headline: *"Whites Only" spray-painted in an OSU academic building*. That was my introduction to college.

Hate is not just personal—it is institutional. A student organization recently hosted Charlie Kirk, who publicly has stated that *"the Civil Rights Act was a mistake" (1964* and *"if I see a Black pilot, I hope he's qualified."* there were **1,700 students and non-students** in attendance. Under SB1, my university would have to remain **neutral** on whether those statements are wrong.

But despite these experiences, I love my university. I have built a community here. I have found mentors who support me, student organizations that empower me, and professors who challenge me to think critically about the world. **Ohio State has given me a space to grow into the person I am today.** But SB1 threatens to take that away—not just from me, but from every student who needs that same support.

SB1 does not protect free speech—it censors it. It eliminates Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs, silences discussions about systemic inequality, and forces institutions to pretend that racism is just a matter of opinion. The Ohio Student Association surveyed over 300 Black students at Ohio's universities, and the majority felt their schools **did not value them**. SB1 ensures they never have to.

If this bill were really about protecting free speech, why did the Ohio Senate Republican Newsletter, and senate blog, recently call students like me *"indoctrinated minds of mush"* for opposing it? SB1 protects only **one kind** of speech—the kind that upholds the status quo.

Silencing discussions on racism does not end racism. Banning DEI programs does not erase inequality. It only ensures that students like me have to fight even harder just to exist in spaces that were never meant for us. I urge you to vote against this bill—not just for me, but for every student who deserves to be seen, heard, and valued.

Thank you.

Through the chair to the senator