

Testimony of Sophia Palermo

Before the House Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

March 11, 2025

Good Morning. Thank you Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sophia Palermo and I am here to urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

Senate Bill 1 will be a major overstep by the government and undermine the higher education system. I am an Environmental Engineering Undergraduate and MBA student at the University of Cincinnati, set to graduate this spring. If you tell me to look back at my 5 years at this college and analyze the impact of DEI, its simply too big of a task. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are key attributes that have been incorporated throughout my entire time at UC, from scholarships to clubs like the Society of Women Engineers I have been making a community for myself with diverse minds. I can't imagine what college as an engineering student would have been like without programs supported by DEI but I can tell you that I wouldn't have gotten as many Co-ops fully paying off my college tuition and leaving me debt free, and I wouldn't have been able to attend the International Society of Women Engineers conference where I secured my dream job post-graduation. I can confidently tell you that if I were to re-do the college application process again and Ohio wasn't supporting DEI groups, I would have chosen to go to a university in another state where my money would have been used to provide me with better resources to pursue my dreams.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony today. I ask you to take my testimony to heart and vote NO on this bill before it harms the education of Ohioans. I am happy to take any questions you may have.