

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. The views I express today are my own as an individual and do not reflect the views of the University of Cincinnati.

My name is Caitlin Borges and I am a straight, married, white Catholic woman, a mother of two boys, a Clevelander by birth, a Cincinnati by vocation, and have passed through many other Ohio districts, big and small through my lifetime, calling each of them home. I have been able to call so many places across Ohio home because I have worked in higher education for the last 15 years. As someone who has plenty of privilege to my name, I am here to tell you why you should not pass senate bill 1 and how it harms the state of Ohio and will have repercussions on our nation. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion- lessons we teach our children- is. Not. Wrong. We teach our children that they will see that there are all different kinds of children in their class- difference skin color, gender, physical appearance or abilities, or even their language. If you are a parent of multiples, you definitely understand how important it is to be equitable. You wouldn't dare give two cookies to one child and then just one to the other child! And we try to teach our children to be good people. To include others on the playground and in the lunchroom. Not to be the bully, and to stand up to bullies. I know that I have felt so much pride and hope seeing my sons apply these lessons at ages 3 and 5.

Understanding and applying diversity, equity and inclusion as an adult is not different. But I can tell you what makes the difference as an adult: a capable and patient teacher. And I don't mean this solely in the sense as a classroom teacher. As parents teaching hard lessons to children, we have to be patient, understanding, and consistent. This is what our higher education professionals -our faculty and staff- do: they patiently prepare our college students for a global world in which the dignity of each person is honored, and we do this by valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion. **Teaching about human dignity is not political.** But if we remove places where this teaching can happen, we lose human decency. And I get it: as a white person, I took it personally when I first started learning about privilege. I was uncomfortable. I was offended! But the difference was that I had faculty and staff who were patient, understanding, and consistent. They changed my life. We don't quit doing math all together just because it gets tough as you get into subjects like calculus. So why is the state implying that our students shouldn't learn about diversity, equity and inclusion through senate bill 1? We still need engineers to use calculus. We still need our graduates to leave universities caring about the dignity of other humans. Is learning about diversity, equity and

inclusion harder as we grow up? Yes. But it is worth it and that's why I do this work. That is the kind of world I want to live in. One where we work through hard things together vs. censoring what makes us uncomfortable.

Universities have been here to better society since the beginning of time. Our centers and spaces for students matter. I would hope that you wouldn't walk into a community in your district and simply shut down the community centers there. Places where people gather to catch up with friends. To discuss a good book. To find someone to help them through some really difficult times. That is effectively what SB 1 is going to do. It is already ripping communities apart and it isn't even law just yet. SB 1 is not serving the people of Ohio and neither are the folks who have sponsored or voted in favor of this bill.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this *extremist* bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.