

Testimony of Francis Miller

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 Francis Miller, and I am here to urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

I am a Transgender Nonbinary educator and graduate student at The Ohio State University, and Senate Bill One would limit my rights as a student and educator as well as limit the rights of the student population. Senate Bill One's purposely unclear ban on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion would limit or prohibit my research and educational focus as a teaching faculty member in the department of Theatre, Film and Media Arts at The Ohio State University, as my research is focused on the Queer and Transgender experience and the Queer and Transgender body in live performance. I'm an actor, I'm a performer, I study performance. I've been in Shakespeare plays and musicals, I've written and directed and created plays from scratch. I do this all as a Transgender Nonbinary person. I teach many queer, transgender and nonbinary students. SB1 would immediately put my position at The Ohio State University in jeopardy, as I am a diversity hire. SB1's directive for the complete elimination of DEI initiatives would also further isolate queer and transgender students who have come to academic theatre seeking a deeper understanding of the human condition, limiting their access to higher education and their own right to artistic expression.

The medium of theatrical performance inherently encourages empathy, collaboration, and understanding, and SB1's directives regarding 'intellectual diversity' would create classrooms where these complex and nuanced topics are interrogated and regulated at the state level, investigated, poked and prodded as educators are forced to re-litigate commonly understood facts about kindness, communication, and common human decency.

I never had an educator like me, if I had, I would have had an easier time understanding myself. I want to remain an educator, I want to teach. I want to be there for my students, but there is such horror and woe in being a transgender educator. There is such grief. For my students, I wish safety, I wish freedom, I wish joy, I wish expression. I wish mercy. I wish mercy from the lawmakers of Ohio.

A quote from poet and translator Anne Carson, on her translation of the greek playwright Euripedes', collected tragedies-

"Why does tragedy exist? Because you are full of rage. Why are you full of rage? Because you are full of grief."

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.