

Hello,

I am an alumni of the University of Cincinnati's School of Design. I graduated in 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Design after completing 4 years of coursework and 2 years of co-op work experience. My co-op experiences at Hasbro, Kohler, Chamberlain, and Apex were formative not only professionally but also personally as I encountered diverse coworkers who brought many valuable experiences and perspectives to our work. I also remember my diverse classmates: students of color, foreign exchange students, LGBTQ+ students, female students, first generation college students, and students with disabilities. It was exhilarating to be surrounded by people with so many different perspectives and experiences, all studying and working together at one of the top design schools in the nation.

But I saw many of these talented future designers struggle to feel at home in UC. They endured periods of depression, imposter syndrome, financial strain, and anxiety all while maintaining high GPA's and landing prestigious jobs. I also saw how campus organizations promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion gave my classmates community. They could talk with people who shared similar life experiences and get advice from mentors who understood the challenges they faced. They could connect with resources to help them thrive. Such organizations would be banned under HB 6.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts also help students fully participate in the classroom. During my time at UC, our professors were always willing to meet with us one-on-one to discuss accommodations. For example, one of my classmates was dyslexic, so she talked with our professor to let him know that another student would be taking notes for her during lecture. I am very concerned that the broad language of HB 6 would prohibit open communication between students and professors about equitably meeting their individual needs. This will impair students' learning and cause them to feel isolated.

It is frankly embarrassing to live in a state that would shoot itself so directly in the foot through its own legislation. The future of education lies in expansive possibilities, not in narrow-minded bans on what students and faculty can or cannot speak about. Diverse students bring diverse perspectives to the classroom, to the companies where they work during co-op, and to the workforce post-graduation. By banning efforts to welcome, understand, and accommodate these students, you are telling them that Ohio universities, and by extension higher education as a whole, is not for them. You are saying that students of color, disabled students, foreign students, LGBTQ+ students, any students who are members of a minority group do not belong in Ohio's schools, they should not build a life in our state, and they should not aspire to jobs that require a college degree in our state. That

is not the future I nor my classmates wanted when we chose to study at the University of Cincinnati almost 20 years ago, and it is certainly not the future I want now.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

-Emilie Winicker