

Testimony of Cynthia Davis

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 Cynthia Davis, and I am writing to urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

I am a freshman student at the Ohio State University, and as a transgender woman on such a diverse campus, I have learned in and out of class of the importance of intellectual diversity. I do not believe the terms *intellectual diversity* and *diversity, equity and inclusion* are in opposition, but rather (ideally) in cooperation.

When I think of “DEI,” I think of the experiences my queer friends have spoken of in our time together. Of the brutally simple, raw truth of lived discrimination, of feeling alone in the world because of their gender identity. I think of the tale told to me by a Holocaust survivor in my junior-high days, as through his words budding students like me learned the true importance of the phrase, *never again*. These are a few examples amongst the innumerable times hearing different and marginalized perspectives have broadened my worldview. In my own experience, my gender transition has taught me much about the importance of open-mindedness—as accepting and working to resolve the difference between my biological sex and gender identity has brought more happiness into my life than I had ever imagined possible before.

I believe the desire to allow freedom of thought as written in HB6 is noble, but misguided. Not all viewpoints are created equal, and HB6 attempts to compel educators into impartiality on even the most foundational issues of world history, including genocide and slavery. For instance, in studying the mechanisms at play behind Hitler’s rise to power in Germany, the next generation of scholars has much to learn about the motivations and processes through which a society can become convicted in committing the gravest atrocities. In this sense, there is little to be lost by showing the philosophy and psychology underlining all perspectives, as the bill acknowledges. However, to treat them all as *equally valid* to others is fallacy. I trust you all as state representatives and sworn public servants to understand the difference between *intellectual diversity* and *intellectual ambivalence*.

Thank you for taking the time to read 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.