

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. My name is Elizabeth Modarelli. I am an English Professor at a community college in Northeast Ohio, as well as a proud alum of an Ohio university. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

As an English professor, my job is to help students compose texts that contribute to important ongoing conversations within their communities. This process includes investigating that conversation, analyzing the potential biases and credibility of the arguments on all sides, reviewing the latest scholarly research, and crafting their own rhetorically-sound and evidence-based arguments. I have always encouraged students to **“reach their own conclusions about all controversial beliefs or policies,”** as the wording of SB1 demands. I have never told students what to believe about the issues they write about, and I take offense to the notion that I “seek to indoctrinate any social, political, or religious point of view,” as writers of this bill claim. If it ended with this, I would not have a problem with this bill. However, the fear that my colleagues and I have is that when we discuss issues of information literacy, source credibility, and evidence-based research, we will be accused of quashing “intellectual diversity.” The reality is that some arguments *are* more logical than others; some sources *do* lack credibility; some “research” is *not* evidence-based. The wording of this bill implies that educators are somehow in the wrong when they make these points and that students should be able to make any claims—however baseless—they want. This is not education.

SB1 also prohibits all things DEI. DEI has become a scapegoat on which some groups have dumped anything they see as wrong with American society. But think about what those letters stand for. Diversity—we are a diverse nation, from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of characteristics and abilities. This is a fact, not a talking point. Equity—another word for fairness and justice, concepts at the very heart of democratic societies. Inclusion—the idea that all of us belong, regardless of our background, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, abilities, etc. These notions are at the very heart of a community college, which is why I love my job. I have students who fit into every single category you can think of, and my job is to help them succeed. That does not look the same for every student. They are all capable of succeeding, but it is my responsibility to ensure that my teaching practice does not inadvertently hinder anyone because of those differences. As a result of constant self-reflection and much research, including professional development sessions that would fall into the DEI categories, I have become a stronger educator and helped more students than ever succeed. I can say without a doubt that my students are better off for my having focused more on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in my teaching practice. Not only that, my colleagues’ students have also benefited as we have discussed these issues. Everyone benefits when we celebrate diversity, make equity a goal, and aim to include everyone.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill that goes against the very meaning of what it means to be an educated society.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.