

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Kyle Key. I have lived in the great state of Ohio my entire life. I hold two college degrees from Ohio Universities. I am an Associate Director with the University Honors Program at the University of Cincinnati, and I have worked in higher education for 10 years - though I am delivering this testimony as a private citizen. I am strongly opposed to SB1.

I would like to focus on the provision around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Senator Cirino has called DEI initiatives “inherently discriminatory,” which appears to indicate a misunderstanding of their history and purpose. Such programs were brought into place to provide support to individuals who have not historically had access to higher education. As demographics change, so too do the student populations that these programs serve. Within the University of Cincinnati’s context, this means that first-generation students from across a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds continue to benefit from such programs. In particular, DEI grants, initiatives, and programming also support Appalachian students from economically depressed regions—a student population to which the Vice President Vance also belonged.

DEI is necessary because there will always be new groups of Americans in need of support. Cutting DEI programs now would prevent future support for new underserved populations.

One such population is male students. According to Pew Research data from 2022, men make up only 42% of 4-year college enrollment. That number has likely decreased since then. It is clear that young men are struggling to find their path into educational opportunities, and this is an important issue. Within my unit at UC, we have begun to gather research and ideate programming around how to increase the enrollment and retention rates for our male student population, as the participation and success of **all** individuals is essential to a University and a democracy. Banning programs and initiatives around DEI *now* would mean that we cannot work to specifically support our male students.

I hope this anecdote – and corresponding data – serves as a vital point of understanding that the work of DEI is essential and ongoing. At its core, DEI is adaptable support based around the changing needs of our society and region. To remove it entirely is folly, and we would do so at our own peril.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this misguided bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I will now take any questions you may have.