

Testimony of Jaiden Hilton
Before the Ohio House Higher Education Committee
Mach 10, 2025

My name is Jaiden Hilton, and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Cincinnati. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

Senate Bill 1 would be a death to the quality of my continued education. It would be a death to quality of the higher education of ALL of Ohio's college students.

Growing up, I was told I was the "American dream." The daughter of an African immigrant and a white schoolteacher from Ohio. I was told I was smart, capable, and could do anything I set my mind to. I could do anything, be anyone. In elementary school, I did projects on figures like Martin Luther King and presented them to the white classmates and teachers that surrounded me. It was not until middle or high school that I realized that not everyone saw "diversity" with the same glittery lens as myself. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, I was heartbroken and scared.

Moving from my more rural school district, which took pride in its book and pride flag bans, to Cincinnati for college opened a new world of experiences and opportunities. I first heard the term "*DEI*" in undergrad, and I was quick to join organizations and projects that supported the diverse groups that make up our society.

I am currently studying to be a Speech Pathologist. As a speech pathologist I will work with clients of color. I will work with clients with disabilities. I will work with Deaf clients. I will work with clients who stutter. I will work with autistic clients. I will work with veteran clients. I will work with impoverished clients. I will work with bilingual clients. I will work with immigrants. I will work with clients from the LGBTQIA+ community.

Let me be clear. If I am unable to learn about these communities and populations, or their history. I will not be able to perform my job. If research supporting these communities is halted. I will not be able to perform my job.

My future job is important. I believe strongly that EVERYONE deserves access to communication.

By passing Senate Bill 1, you will be killing not only my ability to serve these clients, but these clients' access to prepared professionals. By passing Senate Bill 1 you are telling students that look like me, that our education does not matter. You are killing the American Dream.

Thank you for your time,

Jaiden Hilton