

Ohio Senate Testimony: Senate Bill 1

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Good afternoon [____]. My name is Renu Mukherjee, and I am a Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a think tank dedicated to advancing opportunity, individual liberty, and the rule of law in America and its great cities. I am also a Ph.D. candidate in political science. My research focuses on the restoration of colorblindness, merit, and the pursuit of excellence in American higher education. Accordingly, I am here today to speak in support of Senate Bill 1.

In 2023, the United States Supreme Court, after 45 years, outlawed the consideration of race in university admissions, a practice commonly known as “affirmative action.” This practice rewarded so-called “underrepresented minorities” on account of their race and penalized white and Asian American students in violation of both the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause and Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act; it is the foundation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in higher education and beyond. In striking down affirmative action, the Supreme Court iterated the following principle: “Eliminating racial discrimination means eliminating all of it.”

Unfortunately, many universities, including in Ohio, have chosen to ignore this principle of colorblindness. They have continued to discriminate on the basis of race in admissions, in faculty hiring, and in the classroom. Just last week, my Manhattan Institute colleague John Sailor uncovered how two deans at Ohio State University (OSU) green lit the use of racial and gender preferences in faculty hiring. In a separate piece, he noted that OSU, at one point, required applicants for positions in the STEM fields of freshwater biology and astrophysics to submit “diversity statements” pledging fealty to DEI.

The aforementioned deans are still employed at OSU, along with 199 other DEI officers, promulgating a divisive ideology. In 2023, the Ohio State University System spent over \$13 million on DEI-related salaries.

Senate Bill 1 looks to solve these problems by abolishing the DEI bureaucracy at Ohio’s public universities altogether. In doing so, it promotes free speech and inquiry for all students and faculty and thereby returns higher education in Ohio to its original purpose: the production and dissemination of knowledge. Last but certainly not least, Senate Bill 1 ensures that Ohio and its public university system do not run afoul of federal civil rights law, which, as President Trump made clear in a recent executive order, will from now on be enforced by the executive branch.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.