

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Bhada, and I am a third-year undergraduate student majoring in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the Ohio State University. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1 because it would undermine my education.

I understand that my field of study may not be familiar or comfortable for everyone here. However, I respectfully ask that you set aside any assumptions to hear my perspective. I am not a victim of indoctrination. I am speaking earnestly and transparently as an individual, to share the importance of Women's Studies—an academic discipline that will be jeopardized in Ohio by SB 1—to my own personal learning experiences at OSU.

Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary field that investigates how categories—like male and female—shape the way in which we experience our same world. Contrary to some beliefs, it's a field that brings attention to experiences and ideas that have historically been overlooked or undervalued by traditional higher education. It's a field that promotes intellectual diversity *through* principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, in which students are encouraged to become not only critical thinkers but also empathetic and open-minded individuals. And based upon my own experiences as a Women's Studies major at OSU, it's a field in which professors genuinely care for the education and well-being of their students.

As a disabled person who was once unmotivated in any aspect of my education other than receiving a degree by the end of four years, it was Women's Studies professors that helped cultivate my passion and discipline for learning. For them, and eventually myself, my disability was not an obstacle, but a potential tool for understanding the world in new ways. It was through this field that I was able to *claim* my own education. I was encouraged to value not just my degree but what I'm learning and actively question it: not just be a passive recipient of my education.

Unfortunately, many people don't automatically think of all of this when considering Women's Studies. My field has been stigmatized since inception, and many individuals outside of this field still hesitate to challenge these stereotypes. SB 1's attack on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as its vague notion of prohibiting segregation, endangers my field. Ohio should not be pushing for intellectual diversity through the elimination of voices.

I ask that you consider my testimony and vote NO, in favor of an intellectually rich and diverse future for Ohio's students. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I will now take any questions you may have.