

Madeline Heller

Testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 1

February 10, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My Name is Madeline Heller. I am a graduate student at the Ohio State University pursuing a master's in social work. I am an alum of the university, having graduated in 2022 with a bachelor's degree in psychology minoring in women's gender and sexuality studies and a bachelor's in criminology. I am also a recipient of Governor DeWine's Great Minds Fellowship program to support Ohio's community behavioral health workforce. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

According to the 2024 report released by U.S. News & World Report, Ohio State University's graduate social work program is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation. However, this could mean nothing to current and future social work students if they are unable to be licensed after graduation. If this bill is to be passed, the social work program would be susceptible to losing accreditation. According to the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards set by the Council on Social Work Education, all accredited programs must teach 9 core competencies. Competency 3 is to "Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) Practice." If this bill is to pass, not only would Ohio State University stand to lose accreditation, but so would every other public university social work program in the state. The Ohio Licensing Board requires that students attend a CSWE accredited program in order to become a licensed social worker in the state of Ohio. This would then force social work students to attend programs outside of the state or be unable to license any future Ohio graduates. Not only will this be harming students' abilities to succeed professionally, but it would be depriving the state of Ohio of qualified future employees in fields such as mental health, social and community service programs, and protective agencies.

By prohibiting the teaching of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we deprive not just social work students, but the entire student body. DEI teachings foster community, empathy, and improve critical thinking skills. DEI education does not serve to shame individuals based on their identity or beliefs. It is a mechanism that facilitates the application of cultural humility, where all people are respected for who they are. These teachings allow students to step outside of their individual world view to understand the experiences of others, allowing them to leave university with the ability to exercise compassion and understanding to their neighbors and communities. Depriving students of education related to diversity, equity, and inclusion is to refuse to acknowledge and value our differences.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and destructive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify,

Madeline Heller