

Concern from an Out-of-State Ohio Law Student

Chairman and members of the committee: my name is Emily Blane, and I am an out-of-state student at an Ohio law school, testifying as a private citizen. I am concerned about Senate Bill 1 and its impact on the quality of my law school education.

As an out-of-state student, I chose an Ohio law school over in-state and other out-of-state schools to which I was accepted because of the rich education opportunities and the new landscape that attending law school in Ohio could bring me. I was excited for the opportunity to share the classroom and everything that accompanies law school with classmates from a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. SB 1's DEI ban will diminish these cherished learning opportunities. Additionally, a significant part of the law school experience includes curriculum which often sparks informed discussions/debates which are critical learning experiences. These discussions have not only expanded my understanding of the law but have demonstrated the importance, as a future attorney, of being able to listen and effectively respond to opposing counsel. SB 1 would ban the discussion of "controversial beliefs or policies," effectively eliminating one of the most important components of preparing law students for their future responsibility of zealously advocating for their clients. Not to mention, prohibiting certain topics from being discussed in schools may violate the First Amendment rights of students and professors. Additionally, banning debates/discussions of "controversial beliefs or policies" undermines the spirit of our country's democracy and, as a result, the current and future generations of Ohio students will be ill-prepared contributors to that democracy.

For these reasons, I am confident that if SB 1 passes, fewer out-of-state students, like me, will choose to attend Ohio schools over professional/graduate schools in other states. The bill threatens a crucial part of law school and any higher education and will diminish the quality of education that students receive in Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony opposing SB 1.