

**Opponent Testimony for Ohio Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6
House Work-Force and Higher Education Committee
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**Olivia Cobbs (Student)
The Ohio State University**

Dear Members of The House Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Liv Cobbs (They/Them) and I am a 4th year student at The Ohio State University.

As a student, I deeply value the ability to express my freedom of speech and seek out many perspectives to form my opinions. Additionally, as an aspiring scientist, I have been taught to always certify the sources on which I base my research around and find articles that have gone through extensive peer review. After reading these proposed bills, I am deeply disturbed by the elements included that would outright ban DEI and force professors to submit their syllabi for government and public review. I believe that these bills would greatly restrict free speech and create a severely polarized political climate within academia.

The complete ban of DEI within higher education institutions is concerning in a multitude of ways. Diversity and inclusion are especially important to ensure minorities, which are often ignored, are uplifted and supported. My experience as a trans individual within academia would not be possible without the acknowledgment and learning of LGBTQ+ perspectives. DEI is critical to the success of hundreds of students who are part of minority groups. Multiple scholarships are also given based on DEI, and many students rely on the funding to complete their college degrees. Additionally, the surveillance of teachers' syllabi makes it easier for the censorship and erasure of certain materials and classes. For example, Trans Studies, African American Studies, Native American Studies, Global Climate Change Studies, and many other classes could be considered "controversial" in the light of these proposed bills. The elimination of these classes would erase years of study and knowledge from being contributed to academia.

Overall, if these bills are passed and signed into action, the consequences will be detrimental to thousands of students in university. Students who rely on DEI programs in their schools may be forced to drop out due to a lack of support and funding. I therefore strongly oppose Ohio Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 6, and I urge those considering these bills to take into consideration those individuals who are within minority groups who will be impacted.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.

