

A Concerned Second-Year Law Student

Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Abigail Adu, and I am a second-year law student at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. I am speaking in opposition to Senate Bill 1 because its ban on DEI sends a message to students of color and underrepresented students that our experience, culture, and backgrounds do not have a place in higher education.

I am a Black woman and a first-generation law student. I was accepted to UC Law with a full-ride scholarship and am in the top 20% of my law school class. I was not accepted into law school because of DEI; I was accepted because my 4.0 GPA and LSAT were much higher than UC's median. I did not achieve the best grade during my first-year contracts course because of DEI. Grading is anonymous, meaning law school grading is completely unbiased. I have gotten to where I am today because of my merit, hard work, and dedication.

Banning DEI sends a message to people from underrepresented communities that they are not qualified to be in higher education. There are already so few Black women in the legal field, as Black lawyers make up only 5% of practicing lawyers in the US despite being 13% of the US population. By banning DEI, these numbers will only become more disproportionate.

While I have worked hard for all my academic successes, without DEI, the door would not have been open for me to prove myself in the first place. This is why DEI is so important. DEI does not "take" away spots from white students. Instead, DEI creates room for diverse lawyers who otherwise would be barred from entering this field. For these reasons, I urge you to reject this bill.