

Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Briana James, and I am a student at an Ohio university. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1 as it is creating obstacles to cultivating a strong, highly capable, and competitive workforce along with driving away the bright minds of tomorrow.

As a student, when I decided to attend the university I am currently enrolled in, I was amazed by all that this school had to offer from inclusive programs to high rates of finding employment post-graduation. Especially when it comes to my major, I always wanted to ensure that not only that I am guaranteed the chance to compete in the workforce but also be surrounded by an open minded campus so that I can be the best equipped to work in any environment. This bill impedes on this by limiting the ability for faculty to create safe spaces to discuss many key events in our lifetimes and allowing students to see themselves as having a valid input into how these events impact us and how we should approach them. This bill is prioritizing political oversight over the value of a diverse and inclusive, yet challenging university curriculum which is not only detrimental to fostering a strong future workforce but also stunts positive change for Ohio as a whole. To force institutions into this form of political submission is creating more harm than good as it is impeding on rights or expression and protection of cultures to uplift possible misinformation and even deter future students from attending Ohio institutions. How am I, a student and a future addition to the Ohio workforce, supposed to be expected to perform at my best or even be willing to work within this state if I am seeing the inclusive programs and important discussions I value being impeded upon the government especially by a government that I expect to advocate for my best interest? Especially, as a student who is surrounded by a diverse array of fellow classmates, it is disheartening for me to see the state that I once valued as a place of possibility and strength become a space for the projection for harmful ideologies and limitations all in the name of “politics”.

Legislators should be working to improve Ohio’s education system so that we can compete on a national stage and grow as a state, not trying to push political ideologies in a space that should allow for the free flow of ideas especially when efforts to do so have failed in the past. The public, including myself has spoke, and I ask of you to please listen to our testimonies and honor the future workforce and the many professors working to cultivate this workforce and vote against Senate Bill 1.