



HIGHER EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 2/10/2025

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Organization Representing: Self

Testifying on Bill Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Testimony:  Verbal  Written  Both

Testifying As:  Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist?  Yes  No

Special Requests: \_\_\_\_\_

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Senator Jerry Cirino  
Chairs Office of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
The Ohio State Senate

To Senator Jerry Cirino,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed banning of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives in higher education institutions. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts are crucial not only for creating a welcoming and inclusive campus environment but also for enhancing the overall academic experience and improving student outcomes. The banning of DEI initiatives would harm students, undermine academic excellence, and reinforce existing disparities that these programs aim to address.

Research consistently demonstrates that diverse educational environments lead to stronger learning outcomes. According to a study published by the *American Council on Education*, institutions with diverse student bodies have higher rates of student satisfaction and success. Furthermore, a study conducted by the *National Bureau of Economic Research* shows that universities with more inclusive campuses have lower dropout rates for students from underrepresented groups. These findings indicate that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives are not just about fairness—they directly improve academic performance and retention rates.

The statistics around student success are clear. According to the *National Center for Education Statistics* (NCES), the graduation rate for Black students was 41% in 2018, compared to 64% for White students. For Hispanic students, the graduation rate was 53%, still trailing their White counterparts. These gaps in achievement are not due to inherent ability but are influenced by systemic barriers that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs help to address. By providing mentorship, support services, and resources, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives give students the tools to overcome these barriers and succeed academically.

Moreover, diverse and inclusive classrooms are key to preparing students for a globalized workforce. A report from *McKinsey & Company* found that companies with more diverse workforces are 33% more likely to have better-than-average profitability. This is because diverse teams bring varied perspectives and problem-solving approaches, which are essential in today's intersectional world. Colleges and universities have a responsibility to prepare students for this reality, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives play a crucial role in ensuring that all students are equipped to contribute to and succeed in this diverse world.

Banning Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs would not only harm students from historically marginalized groups but also deprive all students of the invaluable learning experiences that come from exposure to a range of perspectives. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

efforts create environments where all students—regardless of their race, gender, socioeconomic status, or background—feel seen, heard, and empowered to thrive.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics explicitly upholds the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Standard 1.05 of the Code of Ethics states:

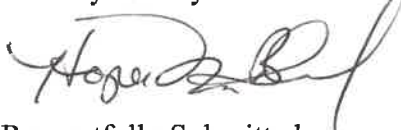
- **Cultural Awareness and Social Diversity (1.05a):** Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- **Equity and Inclusion (1.05b):** Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.
- **Commitment to Anti-Oppressive Practices (1.05c):** Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability.

Banning Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs contradicts these ethical standards and undermines the progress made in creating equitable and inclusive environments. These programs not only ensure compliance with ethical guidelines but also enhance social cohesion, increase opportunities for marginalized populations, and foster understanding and respect among diverse groups.

Efforts to dismantle Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives threaten the ability of professionals, educators, and organizations to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse society. Such bans would negatively impact underrepresented individuals and limit the ability to address historical and systemic inequalities effectively. Moreover, eliminating DEI initiatives contradicts the fundamental American values of fairness, equal opportunity, and justice for all. In 2020, Governor Mike DeWine called racism a public health crisis. How can the Banning of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion align with this very concept and aid in the elimination of racialized practices in the United States?

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider any proposals to ban Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives in higher education. The evidence is clear that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs promote better academic outcomes, create more inclusive and supportive campuses, and prepare students for a diverse and interconnected world. We must continue to support and strengthen these efforts to ensure equal opportunities for all students and foster an environment where everyone can succeed.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.



Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Hope M. Bland

