

Written Testimony in Opposition of Senate Bill 1

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The Honorable Kristina D. Roegner, Chair

Senate Higher Education Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 1 (SB 1). My name is Zachary Srivastava. I am a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Cincinnati and a Graduate Fellow with the Cincinnati Ethics Center. I am concerned that SB 1 will harm our shared pursuit of intellectual diversity by decreasing diversity among the student bodies of Ohio's public universities. My testimony is informed by my experience in the classroom, as a student and instructor, and from being raised in a family that has benefited greatly because of public universities and the State of Ohio's commitment to diversity.

In 1961, my grandfather obtained a student visa to pursue a PhD in statistics at Michigan State University. After graduating, he obtained employment at The Ohio State University, allowing him to bring his wife and two young children, my father and uncle, to the United States. When my father began attending OSU, he too was an international student. My mother was a diverse student from a very different background. She was raised in a small, rural town in southern Utah by a single mother and was the first person in her family to attend college. Despite the difficulties experienced by first-generation students, she graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of Utah. A college education transformed each of their lives and shaped my family. They show the benefits diverse students have for our communities. When they succeed in their educational goals, they also give back to their communities, not just as professors, professionals, and public servants, but as soccer coaches, PTA members, and scout troop leaders.

We cannot promote intellectual diversity in our public universities unless we welcome and support diversity in our student bodies. The 2023-24 Annual Report showed the University of Cincinnati has 4,621 international students, nearly 10% of its student body.<sup>1</sup> First-generation

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<sup>1</sup> "2023-2024 Annual Report." Accessed February 10, 2025. <https://international.uc.edu/about/reports/2023-24.html>.

students make up approximately 25% of UC's student body.<sup>2</sup> As a student, I benefit from my classmate's diverse viewpoints. As an instructor, I see my students learn from one another in discussions. These students contribute to intellectual diversity at public universities because of their diverse backgrounds. This is why I am alarmed by Section 3345.0217(B)(1a)(vi) of SB 1.

This section prohibits any scholarship or funding related to “diversity, equity, and inclusion in any manner” is prohibited (In 627-628). New scholarships cannot be created and existing scholarships must “eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion requirements” (In 631-632). What does SB 1 mean for the funding that supports scholarships, training programs, affordable housing, and financial aid for these students? The sweeping scope of this provision defunds pathways for students from diverse backgrounds—like my grandfather, father, and mother—to access higher education.

To reiterate my concerns more succinctly, there is a logical flaw within the premise of SB 1. Intellectual diversity is a worthy goal. But, it is one we cannot achieve without diverse student bodies. Section 3345.0217(B)(1a)(vi) will harm the ability of students from diverse backgrounds to pursue higher education in Ohio universities, thereby harming the intellectual diversity we strive to cultivate.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,  
Zachary Srivastava

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<sup>2</sup> About UC. “UC Facts.” Accessed February 10, 2025. <https://www.uc.edu/about/factsheet.html>.