

Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Claire Green, and I am a student at an Ohio university. I am deeply concerned about Senate Bill 1 and its impact on my education and future career.

Last year, students like me organized, testified, and spoke out against Senate Bill 83 because we knew it would make our education worse, not better. We rejected the idea that politicians should dictate what we can and cannot learn. We opposed attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that help students succeed. And most of all, we fought to keep Ohio's universities competitive and open to all perspectives, not just the ones politicians approve of. The failure of Senate Bill 83 should have been the final word on this issue, but now we are being forced to fight the same battle again. Ohio students do not want this bill. Our universities do not need this bill. The people of Ohio already rejected this bill. I ask you to respect that decision and vote against Senate Bill 1.

This bill limits the ability of faculty to foster open discussions in the classroom by imposing vague restrictions on teaching controversial topics. As a student, I want to be challenged. I want to engage with difficult subjects and hear diverse perspectives. Getting to hear about different perspectives is what makes education especially higher education so special. This bill also removes DEI initiatives, which have been instrumental in supporting students from different backgrounds, ensuring that we all have an equal opportunity to succeed. Without these programs, Ohio risks alienating students from underrepresented communities, discouraging them from attending our state's institutions.

I fear that this bill will diminish the value of my degree, making Ohio universities less competitive nationally. Ohio has amazing universities like OSU and UC, and I would hate to see the reputation of the state and these intuitions diminished over a bill that has already been rejected upon its first introduction to the legislature. Not only could this bill tarnish the state's reputation, but it could also impact Ohio's economy if schools have to downsize due to low enrollment, something that no proud Ohioan wants to see. I am proud to have gotten my bachelors degree from an Ohio university and proud to pursue my J.D. here as well, a state I have called my home for a decade now. I would hate to see the state that I love decline because of the fear of academic autonomy and intellectual diversity. I urge you to reject this bill and prioritize policies that enhance—not restrict—our education.