

Written Testimony in Opposition to SB1

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Bethany Weber. I am an Independently licensed Social Worker with supervisory designation in the state of Ohio. I have been working in the Behavioral Health field for over 15 years and have experience in direct practices as well as supervising Social Workers seeking their Independent License. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

The Social Work profession is built on the ideals of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as we need to be able to connect with a wide range of individuals in the community. This bill's banning of DEI will hurt the standing of Ohio's higher education institutions, students, and Social Work as a whole within Ohio. These bans on "controversial topics." also put entire programs at risk. As a Social Worker I am especially concerned about its impact on social work programs' ability to maintain accreditation. Social work program accreditation by CSWE requires content in diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure that social workers can practice effectively with clients of all backgrounds, belief systems, and identities. I am deeply concerned that the passage of this legislation would result in social work programs losing accreditation and thus not allowing social work students to become licensed to offer critical behavioral health services in Ohio.

As well, SB1 poses a serious threat to Ohio economic growth. The inability to license current students and educate/license future social work students in Ohio presents a serious social and economic issue for Ohio. Social worker is an in-demand field. As a supervisor in the field, social work positions are always available and finding viable candidates is already challenging. There are currently not enough social workers to fill all the positions available in Ohio – these are for nonprofit and for-profit companies in Ohio. I do believe that if Ohio public universities are not able to provide a path for social work licensure, these industries will plummet. I do not see students leaving Ohio to obtain this degree and coming back to our state to practice as licensure guidelines vary state to state.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and destructive bill, SB1.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

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