

Members of the Higher Education Committee –

This statement is made on behalf of Citizens for a Better Beavercreek.

This is Black History month. Let's talk for a minute about Black History.

On March 7, 1965, John Lewis led civil rights activists across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. John Lewis was a lifelong supporter of what we now call Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – the people on the other side of that bridge, the ones who viciously attacked the marchers with billy clubs and tear gas, really hated what we now call DEI. John Lewis, Martin Luther King Jr., and all the great social justice icons championed principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion before it was called that. Proponents of Senate Bill 1 / House Bill 6 feel the same about DEI as the people with the billy clubs and the tear gas did.

National NAACP President Derrick Johnson has stated that “DEI programs help ensure that everyone can prosper”. The sponsors of this bill seem remarkably unconcerned about what the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization has to say about the value of DEI. The NAACP supports DEI – white supremacist groups hate DEI. What should I infer from the fact that the sponsors of this bill are on the same side as white supremacists on this issue?

If you are Black, and you feel like anti-DEI legislation attempts to silence you, or if you are in the LGBTQ+ community and you feel like it attempts to force you back in the closet – that's because it does. The U.S. is becoming more diverse by the minute, but anti-DEI laws are written by overwhelmingly White, straight lawmakers to silence ideas that make them uncomfortable. Outlawing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is simply backlash against the racial awakening prompted by George Floyd's murder, and an attempt by the White, straight majority to set the terms for how we think about race and the LGBTQ+ community in this country.

Opportunities are unequally distributed along racial lines in this state, and everyone knows it. In a state where Black babies are more likely to be born into poverty (and statistically less likely to even survive childbirth), outlawing education about why that is the case just helps keep it that way.

Proponents of Senate Bill 1 claim they are actually protecting free speech – yet the legislation contains a list of ideas that are prohibited, and has sanctions for those who share those ideas. That is not what free speech looks like.

DEI education has changed my life. I am a different person – a far better person– because I know more about the perspectives, challenges and stories of people who don't look like me. Don't take the opportunity for this kind of life changing education away from the people of Ohio.

Senate Bill 1 is a racially problematic piece of legislation that has no business being considered in a state with such beautiful, powerful diversity.

Jared Cutler

Citizens for a Better Beaver creek

Beaver creek, Ohio