

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony. My name is Jessica Williams, and I am a clinical psychologist who is proud to have received my graduate degree from an Ohio public university, and I am proud to currently provide mental health services to Ohioans across the state. I am **opposed** to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

This bill as it reads would make it difficult for universities to teach information that is critical for their students in entering the workforce, and it would make it difficult for universities to hire staff in a manner that is responsive to student needs. As someone who completed a graduate degree in clinical psychology, there is information regarding the impact of discrimination on individuals that is an essential component and ethic of the profession that is taught at both the undergraduate and graduate level. This is not for the purpose of creating divisiveness but instead to prepare you for responding effectively to patients and helping them work through these painful experiences to provide an array of relief, including not viewing themselves as a victim. I have worked in universities providing mental health services to students, and the courses, instruction, and additional experiences offered by universities in my education have allowed me to keep an open mind and co-create spaces where merit and character are how colleagues are evaluated and not solely their identity and/or connections. Additionally, having hiring conversations rooted in diversity, equity, and inclusion principles allowed our staff to be responsive to student needs and requests for more male therapists and more Mandarin speaking therapists when I used to work at university counseling centers. We were able to identify and acknowledge that we needed more male therapists in predominantly female staffed centers because men were underrepresented, and we were able to identify and acknowledge a need to have therapists who could speak Mandarin at a university I worked at with a high international student population because we were able to have open discussions about identity and inclusiveness and how to recruit candidates that may not view our centers as welcoming at face value. We were also able to have productive and inclusive discussions once we found qualified candidates to fill these positions because we were not barred from acknowledging differences to facilitate the creation of inclusive, respectful environments. It is very difficult to understand how it can be perceived as "controversial" to ask that university staff commit to creating inclusive environments when inclusivity means ensuring others feel included and that they can express differing viewpoints respectfully to expand their perspectives, an experience for which university students are paying.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill as it is confusing, unnecessary, and extreme.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written testimony,

Dr. Jessica Williams