

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dr. Eve McPherson. I am Professor of Music at Kent State University at Trumbull. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 1.

I oppose this legislation for many reasons, but I want to focus on one reason that specifically affects my students at Kent Trumbull: banning DEI programs will harm the ability of my *mostly white students*, who also reside in strongly Republican areas, from successfully completing their degree programs.

Why is this the case? It is the case because these students, who seemingly represent the majority of Ohioans, are also, more often than not, economically disadvantaged and first-generation college students and my DEI training has been inclusive of this group. You may not realize it, but DEI is not just about serving the needs of American minority communities. It is also about providing equity and fostering inclusivity among students who struggle in college.

Thus, given my population of students, I have been trained in meeting their needs. For instance, many of my students work full- or part-time jobs while simultaneously pursuing degrees. To accommodate their need to earn money for themselves and their families (many are parents), I have learned how to offer flexibility in the delivery of my courses. This makes them feel included and valued. I have learned not to punish them for being unable to always prioritize their schoolwork. Instead, I work with them to complete a degree that upholds rigorous standards while meeting their scheduling needs. I mean, could any of you work until 3 a.m. in the morning at Dunkin' Donuts and then come to my 9 a.m. class? I have a student who did just that, a white man, and I am proud that I helped him through the class with flexible assignments and individual meetings. DEI has taught me empathy for the needs of student such as this one.

The DEI programs I have participated in have also helped me understand how to increase equitable practices for my largely white, yet economically disadvantaged students. Many cannot afford textbooks. They have no parental support for school and cannot depend on families to support this additional expense. Most textbooks start at around \$100 – if a student has 4 classes, that is at least an additional \$400 they need to find. So, I created a class that only uses no-cost Open Educational Resources for my students. I used DEI training to learn how to create and find these resources.

Now, perhaps you think that these students should just not attend college, since they cannot easily afford it and must balance it with work and family. However, the main programs on the Trumbull campus train future nurses and peace officers. I'm sorry, I don't know about you, but I am very keen on highly trained nurses and police officers who are also good at problem solving through critical thinking – a key component of any college education.

And guess what? The DEI programming initiated at Kent State *specifically aimed at helping regional campus students successfully complete their degrees* has shown remarkable success. Our retention and graduation rates have shown statistically significant improvement after this programming was instated.

I am not sure you understand what DEI does. DEI is about supporting diversity, equity and inclusion for ALL students who might struggle in college. In my case, these are white students who come from communities that tend to vote Republican.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.