

Testimony of Sabrina Estevez  
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
11 February, 2025

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

I am Sabrina Estevez. I am a second-year student at The Ohio State University just up the road from here. I am working toward an International Studies and Political Science double major. I am the product of public education, I was raised in a military family, and I have lived in the state of Ohio for the better part of my life.

Today, I stand before you in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1 as a private citizen, but I am not alone. Since the public caught wind of Senate Bill 1, I have spoken with university department chairs, professors, graduate students, countless undergraduates, and concerned citizens. Every single one of them abhor in a future where Senate Bill 1 is reality and interest groups and politicians who could never know Ohio like they do have seized the reins of our universities.

I will forever be grateful for the experiences I have had at The Ohio State University. I am supported by faculty, mentors, and peers who want nothing but the best for me and my future. Inside and outside of the classroom, I am pushed every day to be the best version of myself, to ask questions, and to encourage others to do the same. This would not be possible, however, had I not received many of the scholarships I did that are jeopardized by this bill. My education is awarding me the tools that I need to break the ceilings that keep me down – and there is no shame in that. Had Senate Bill 1 been in effect when I was choosing the appropriate higher education route for myself, leaving the state of Ohio would have been priority one.

But brain drain, lost jobs, and lower enrollment are not the only issues that Senate Bill 1 bestows upon the state. This is not just an economic issue, but a moral one. It is profoundly selfish to dismantle and disband diversity, equity, and inclusion in universities, and the effects will be substantial.

As I sat in on proponent testimony just two weeks ago, I heard DEI be contrasted with merit, and sat through stories and reasons as to why merit should be restored upon our institutions as a replacement for DEI. But understand this: Senate Bill 1 does not accomplish this goal. In fact, the merit of a degree from the state of Ohio is significantly eroded if this bill passes.

Under the confines of Senate Bill 1, students in Ohio become unable to discuss paramount, real-world topics in a manner that is both productive and critical. Their degrees will mean less, their knowledge will be limited, and their futures become bleak.

And so I leave you with this:

Thanks to Martin Luther King Jr, it is often said, quoted, and played out in lived experiences that there are two Americas. Per J. William Fulbright, on one hand, the generous, sensible, informed, and passionate America that is willing to be self-critical. The other increasingly egotistical, solemn, pontificating, and arrogant in their power.

The America – and more importantly today, the Ohio – of arrogant power is not one I or anyone else deserves. For the health of Ohio's education, workforce, economy, and reputation, fail this bill.

Thank you.