

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Cheryl Kisanuki. I recently retired from my position as a pediatric specialist in liver and pancreas disease at Nationwide Children's Hospital. I am an emeritus professor at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. I am strongly opposed to SB1 and its companion bill HB6. The arguments and testimony I heard last Wednesday supporting SB1 indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts in higher education and corporations generally. There is an assumption that DEI efforts result in the hiring or promotion of individuals less qualified than would have happened without DEI efforts. In fact, the opposite is true.

DEI efforts came about in order to hire and promote the most qualified individuals. DEI efforts bring us closer to a meritocracy than we have ever been in the past. Let's not forget that for most of American history, to get any job with income security and upward mobility, you had to be a white man. To get into college, you had to be of a certain race and gender. While The Ohio State University is very proud of the accomplishments of Jesse Owens, when he attended the university, the university was fighting in the courts to maintain white-only on-campus housing. Women continue to face disparities in being promoted to higher academic positions despite an almost equal representation across disciplines at early career stages. Many studies demonstrate that highly qualified individuals who are not non-disabled, heterosexual white men are discriminated against at multiple stages of career advancement, including in hiring and promotion. Through DEI efforts, colleges, universities, and companies can access a broader range of qualified candidates to ensure they hire the best individuals for the position. If we want to lead the world, we need to make the most of all of our citizens' capabilities and contributions. Different perspectives from a diverse workforce lead to better problem-solving and boost productivity.

The push to eliminate DEI activities has nothing to do with its effect on the qualifications of individuals hired, promoted, or awarded. The presence of someone who is female or non-white is not evidence of a lack of qualification. In my lifetime, the US has made strides in reducing discrimination against individuals based on gender, disability, sexual orientation, and race, and DEI initiatives have been part of this. The only people who feel Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are a bad thing are individuals who have been benefitting from the subordination of tens of millions of Americans under hierarchies of gender, race, sexuality, and class.

Ohio is awash in high-quality institutions of higher education. SB 1 would make Ohio's public colleges and universities less attractive to students and staff and risk making Ohio an educational backwater. Nationwide, colleges are competitive. If a student doesn't like what we have to offer, they have plenty of other places to choose from. Every time a young person moves out of the state, it is a loss to Ohio's future and its economic health.

Please consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in writing.