

February 10, 2025

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

Please accept this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

My name is Dr. Michael Flatt, and I am a lifelong Ohio resident and proud Cuyahoga County voter. The disingenuously titled “Advance Ohio Higher Education Act” is a disgraceful attempt to divide Ohioans at a time when our state and our nation needs our leaders to focus on the real issues facing their constituents instead of fanning the false flames that keep us divided. The use of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” as a smoke screen to cover up the state grab for increased government control over higher education and bloated bureaucracy is one of the many reasons that people have lost faith in our elected officials.

Ohioans are facing real problems in their daily lives, Rents and mortgage payments are far outpacing the real increase in pay for average workers, health care costs continue to skyrocket, roads crumble under the lack of investment and care of our local governments, and families struggle to put food on their tables. Yet, when I turn on the televisions to see my elected officials’ actions to deal with these real concerns, I hear them screaming about diversity trainings and claiming (with no evidence) that immigrants are taking unfair advantages and stealing opportunities from so-called “real” Americans.

I do not feel the need to dignify any of these attacks on diversity and inclusion initiatives and would simply ask anyone to give me an explanation for any case in which they believe equity to not be a worthwhile goal for a just society. In fact, it is obvious these are merely ploys to divide us as a state and as a nation, keeping neighbors from realizing that we have much more in common than what makes us different. The real goal of bills such as these is the power grab of politicians who seeks to take away the freedoms of workers, both in the form of organized labor and collective bargaining and in the academic freedom of educators who have dedicated their lives to their students. The only real “controversy” that occurs on college campuses is the one that politicians such as the ones supporting this bill stir up for their own political gain. To suggest that students and Ohioans are not able to think for themselves is an insult to our intelligence and reveals far more about what our so-called leaders think about us than we think about each other.

These bills do not seek to advance education, but rather to control workers’ rights, and limit freedom of thought. Ohioans will not be fooled by this short-sighted attempt to rush these changes in under the current chaos of the DEI-crazed administration. Ohio will be better to remember that we once considered ourselves to be the “heart of it all” and remember that *all means all*.

Respectfully submitted in opposition of Senate Bill 1,

Michael Flatt, Ph.D