

Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Grace Lefton, and I am a student at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. I am deeply concerned about Senate Bill 1 and its impact on my education and future career.

This bill threatens to limit faculty members' ability to foster open, meaningful discussions in the classroom by imposing vague restrictions on teaching controversial subjects. As a student, and as a future lawyer in Ohio, I believe in the value of being challenged. I seek out opportunities to engage with difficult topics and diverse perspectives. This is essential for developing the critical thinking and analytical skills that make a great lawyer. How can we expect future legal professionals to effectively defend or represent clients if they are not exposed to a variety of viewpoints and rationales?

Moreover, this bill seeks to eliminate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, which have been pivotal in supporting students like myself from diverse backgrounds. These programs ensure that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has an equal opportunity to succeed. Without such initiatives, Ohio risks alienating students from underrepresented communities, which could discourage them from choosing our state's institutions.

I am concerned that this bill, if passed, could significantly diminish the value of my degree and make Ohio's universities less competitive on a national scale. For the sake of our future as students, professionals, and citizens, I respectfully urge you to reject this bill and prioritize policies that promote, rather than restrict, the growth and advancement of education.