

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 Skye Hamilton. I am a sophomore student at Otterbein University. I am a quadruple major in English, Criminology/Justice Studies, Sociology, and Political Science, with a minor in Legal Studies/Pre-Law. I am Secretary of Otterbein University's Student Government. And I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

I come from a small town in rural Ohio, and my high school did not focus on sharing information about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with us. In 2020, when the Black Lives Matter movement spiked in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic, I wanted desperately to understand the arguments being made. I had always felt intelligent, but I found myself unable to understand what people were talking about when they said that all white people were racist. I knew that I wasn't and didn't want to be, and I tried to comfort myself with that knowledge. It took me a little bit longer to understand that they meant that white people in America benefit from a racist system that oppresses people of color and other diverse backgrounds. I worked to understand that we are all subject to biases because of how we are socialized, and we have to unlearn those prejudices.

I took that knowledge with me to college, and I have learned the most from people who are strong supporters of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. They are my professors and my friends and my peers and the members of my university's staff. They have taught me how to stand up for myself and believe in myself. They have taught me how to listen to others and how I can support other communities. They have also taught me the importance of supporting my community here at Otterbein. I know so much more now than I ever thought I could learn, and I believe that my studies make me a better person. I have taken Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses, and everything that I have learned from those classes has truly impacted me greatly. I can't put into the words the value of these experiences.

As a private institution, Otterbein will not be as privy to these changes from this bill as public institutions, and for that I am truly grateful. But I still can't stop thinking about WGSS students at larger, public universities. The Race and Ethnic Studies students who are wondering what they're going to do. The people in BFA programs at schools who have few numbers of students going into those fields who are scared about the future of their program. All of these studies are so important, and they are crucial to our survival as a nation. With everything in the news recently, I can't stop thinking about World War II and the Holocaust and the parallels between what I am witnessing now and what I have read in history books. The first group of people that Hitler and the Nazis targeted were transgender people; the first book burnings were burning transgender research. If we do not listen to history, we are doomed to repeat it. Learning about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is so important. Learning about systemic racism was never intended to make white people feel badly for the actions of our ancestors and for our actions now. It is not intended to make us feel guilty for having inherited wealth. None of this is the goal of DEI. The goal is education and making sure that everyone has a chance to succeed. These liberal ideas that have shaped our nation are not without flaw; people are not born into the same circumstances, so for everyone to have a chance, there needs to be equity. We need

to listen to people who have experiences different from our own. This is crucial. Our ignorance on these topics is their power. Our ignorance is their power. My ignorance is their power. Your ignorance is their power. Please don't vote to make people ignorant.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive bill.