

Greetings Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Melanie, and I have spent years advocating for equitable educational opportunities as an educator. I relocated to Ohio for work and many things about this state make it a desirable place to work and live. However, I stand firmly against Senate Bill 1 because it undermines the fundamental principles of academic freedom, inclusion, and critical thinking which are essential to a thriving democracy.

This bill's attack on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs is not just an attack on higher education, it is an attack on the values of fairness and opportunity that should define our state. By restricting how universities address diversity and banning faculty from engaging with so-called "controversial" topics, this bill ensures that students will be less prepared to engage with the realities of the world. Working with diverse people is a part of a counselor's work. In my role as a Counselor Educator, my professional ethics mandate that we train students to be able to work with all people.

Additionally, threatening university funding based on ideological standards is a blatant attempt to force institutions into political submission. This is not how we build a strong, inclusive, and forward-thinking Ohio. I implore this committee to listen to the voices of students, educators, and community members and to reject this dangerous piece of legislation.

Please see the attached Witness Information Form

Warmly,

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