

Testimony of Darci Retherford
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 6, 2025

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

My name is Darci Retherford, and I am a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I am a resident of Cincinnati, OH 45219. I am submitting an opposition testimony against S.B. 1.

- After taking a variety of classes that include information about DEI I have learned so much about other people and why others act and are the way that they are. Due to this I am able to be a better friend and human. I have learned how to become a better clinician not just to those who are in minority groups but to all people who might pass through my future practice. If this bill passes, classes where we learn that other cultures do life differently might be eliminated and this will stunt societal growth. No one learns from having the same routine or information everyday. By learning about and from other cultures and ensuring everyone is included and understood helps our society grow. Passing senate bill 1 will remove necessary classes that I take which make sure I learn more about how to treat each client. Without this, people will get misdiagnosed, underdiagnosed, or even over diagnosed. One example of this is in my DEI class we learned about how people who speak African American vernacular English(AAVE) will omit the possessive s in speech. This is something that we might target if we hadn't taken this class causing an overdiagnosis and wasting our time, and therefore wasting everyone's money. These classes of DEI are CRITICAL to education to ensure proper care of all citizens.
- I am someone with ADHD. Often, I find myself having extra energy and drifting off. Due to having DEI in my classrooms I am as included as everyone else. I'm able to participate with everyone else and succeed due to adaptations that have been made due to DEI. No one person is like another. DEI doesn't just help those who are a part of a minority. It helps everyone. We are all different and teaching people to love the differences and to accommodate and learn about differences allow us to learn about the differences in ourselves. If the person reading this is thinking 'I don't need DEI because I am a straight cis white man', I challenge you to think of a time when you felt left out, maybe uncomfortable. Maybe it was when you were a kid and all of your friends were eating pb and js but you had a ham sandwich packed. They all were bonding over their pb and j. Or maybe there was another situation where you felt left out. This happens to EVERYONE at some point or another. Teaching people that it is okay to be different will not just help those who are a part of minority groups, but will help all people who have felt left out. Passing Senate bill one will eliminate diversity equity and inclusion teams

that are working towards making everyone feel included. I know I have been lucky to have had DEI at my school, because it has allowed my peers and I to learn about people with ADHD and why I sometimes act the way I do. If you pass this bill kids like me and you will continue to feel alone and excluded.

- The last point I will make is with a more specific example. I am a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community. I want to raise kids someday. I want my kids to grow up in a world where they aren't scared to tell people that they have two moms. I want to live in a world where my kids are protected by the legislature to be who they are. Having DEI doesn't mean they have to think one way or that anything is right or wrong but rather having DEI allows people to do the opposite. We learn that there are lots of different people and with that we learn about new ways to do things and new ways to believe. Taking away DEI will only exclude people and ideas. This will stunt societal growth and discontinue positive change. The only way we can grow is by learning from others, this is why I urge you to not pass senate bill 1.