

Dear Sirs and Ladies of the Committee,

My name is Stephanie Grenier, and I am a full-time student attending Bowling Green State University at the Firelands Campus in Huron, OH. I am a Social Work Major and expect to graduate in Fall of 2027. I also am a Certified Peer Recovery Supporter, Certified Family Peer Supporter, and a Chemical Dependency Counselor Assistant in the state of Ohio.

In addition to these, I am also many of the “-isms”, and I am writing to express my concerns about SB 1. I am a 50-year-old bisexual woman who lives with “severe and persistent mental illness”, one of which is borderline personality disorder. I also am not a christian. I receive Medicaid and SNAP benefits, and I carry student loan debt. Thus, I fall into sexist, ageist, ableist, classist, and religiophobia categories of discrimination daily. Rather than claim disability or cry about how life is not fair, I maintain my stability and work part time at the school library, roughly 27 hours/week. As a full-time student, I carry a courseload of 15 credit hours. To say that I struggle would not be an overstatement, and my concerns about this bill and what it means to myself and other Social Work majors, nay ALL other students of higher education, have caused me to lose sleep, have affected my schoolwork, have caused my eating to become disordered, and my anxiety to increase substantially.

On Friday 2/7/2025, I received an emergency alert email from NASW about how Ohio is trying to eliminate all DEI from higher education. After reading the breakdown of

SB 1 at

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/141BbOG7RzWJD96S2CkRPL2mGK6nxU9cqYU4dWvUMbyU/edit?tab=t.0>, I am frightened.

Section 2 requires that teachers put their contact information on the syllabi and that the syllabi be made publicly available to everyone, including people who do not attend the school. This is concerning as unpopular teachers may be made targets. I know a teacher who was stalked by another teacher; if her information had been publicly available, her life could have been put in danger.

Section 6 appears to eliminate any discussions of “controversial beliefs”, section 6, which means that teachers will not be able to correct students who have differing beliefs, such as the veracity of the Holocaust. This inhibits thoughtful and critical class discussions on many topics, some of which are uncomfortable. If a student answers a question wrong on a test, such as scientifically proven facts about climate warming and how it affects the oceans, a teacher cannot mark the question wrong.

Section 7 has the potential, however, to contradict section 6 as it requires intellectual diversity be demonstrated and that faculty members be committed to allowing intellectual diversity to be expressed. How does that work, I question, when section 6 refuses to allow this diversity when it comes to conflicting opinions, which will not be allowed? Are only students allowed to debate and have diverse discourse about things outlawed by section 6?

Section 13 appears to be redundant at many colleges already require a class on American government be taught. In addition, while I agree that students should read the texts listed in section 13, I find it ironic that many of these texts, such as Letters from a Birmingham Jail, are related to our constitutional and civil rights that are being stripped from us even as this review takes place.

Section 16 concerns me as well as it has the possibility to eliminate tenure and remove tenured professors from their positions. While I applaud the attempt to keep the professors “honest” and teaching to the best of their ability even after they become tenured, I disagree with the suggested implementation. The phrasing of the section could cause qualified professors to decide to avoid Ohio colleges for fear of losing their positions even after obtaining tenure.

Section 17, however, concerns me greatly as a student. The phrasing for retrenchment appears to indicate that a school can stop a program without any sort of warning or notice. As a student attending a smaller satellite campus with few students physically attending, this section means that the college could decide to close my campus without notice or legitimate cause at any time. If students drop a class, the school could use that as an excuse to close an entire program, and that is dangerous. As a student of Social Work, even stopping some of the required programs means I could be left without the classes needed to obtain my licensure, leaving me several tens of thousands of dollars in debt. This also means that teachers could be left without jobs.

One very pertinent example is my Diversity, Oppression, and Social Justice class- we had 7 students in the class last semester. Yet, this class is one that is required for my degree, and my degree is required for my license. Under section 17, the school could decide to cancel the class entirely, leaving myself and several other students missing a required class.

Section 19 is concerning as it seeks to eliminate a useful tool often used by unions. Removing entirely or setting restrictions on what may and may not be used as bargaining chips ties the unions' hands and effectively hobbles their ability to do their jobs.

Section 24 is related as it prevents striking, another tool used by the unions. I find myself questioning if part of the goal is to eliminate and ban unions entirely?

Section 22 part b risks all Social Work majors' ability to become licensed in our field. It promotes reverse racism by refusing to acknowledge race. Moreover, it promotes and encourages many other types of "-isms" and oppression based on gender, race, sexuality, class and socioeconomic standing, and many others. It denies any discussion of systemic racism and teaching accurate history, and while we know that history is written by the victors, doing so denigrates the history of the ones who have lost. It also means that some of the clubs and student organizations that have been formed will be forced to disband, removing a source of support for students who are challenged in some way.

Related to this section is section 175, and this is the other section that causes me the most fear when it comes to graduating and obtaining my Social Work license. For nearly a century or just over, social workers have been concerned with helping those who cannot speak for themselves. Banning any and all discussion of diversity, equity, and inclusion has far-reaching consequences. It means that students subject to the various “-isms”, like me, can easily become targets of those who think differently. It means people will not be able to defend themselves when controversial opinions are also banned; it leaves students like me and like my peers in the Clark Scholars Inclusive Program without any protections from even “common place bullying”.

Not only does SB 1 directly impact my education and ability to become licensed, but this also has the potential to have wide-reaching effects if passed. Not only does it impact social work students, but it impacts virtually every higher education student in Ohio. If passed, it then can be implemented in other states who can then potentially use Ohio as “Patient Zero”. There is already a shortage of social workers in the US, and the inability to license new social workers can only cause greater harm to the ones already working in the field by way of burnout and additional pressure. Social work professors may experience pressure to stop teaching and return to the field to pick up the slack. More, other teachers may experience the repercussions in not being able to have intelligent conversations with differing opinions in classes and not being able to encourage students to think independently and critically; instead, students may be

taught to follow the leaders' thinking and not to question. But wait, there's more, to quote the late-night TV commercials. If this passes in Ohio, it could trickle down from higher education to high schools to middle schools to elementary schools.

This is frightening. Until my social policy class, I had volunteered locally but never thought on a macro level. At best, I concerned myself with mezzo level thinking when it came to policies and consequences. I thought about the people I help, my friends and family. I thought about my neighborhood and town and, possibly, my state. Now, I'm starting to think on a larger scale of the impacts of the changes that are being made. I realize that part of the speed and urgency of the changes is to exhaust people. After all, when you give people too much information in a very short time span, it is difficult to focus on one or two things. When the time span is exceedingly short, the pressure to prioritize becomes nearly unbearable. And when you combine everything that has happened in less than one month, it is hard to know what is a priority and what is a smokescreen. This legislation says it is meant to enhance Ohio's higher education, but instead, it threatens academic freedom by putting too much power into the hands of politicians.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion do not limit intellectual diversity but, by their very nature, increase it by ensuring that everyone has a seat at the table to share and expand perspectives. This bill's banning of DEI will hurt the standing of Ohio's higher education

institutions and, more importantly, students. These bans on “controversial topics.” also put entire programs at risk.

As a Social Work major, I am especially concerned about SB 1’s impact on social work programs' ability to maintain accreditation. Social work program accreditation by CSWE requires content in diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure that social workers can practice effectively with clients of all backgrounds, belief systems, and identities. I am deeply concerned that the passage of this legislation would result in social work programs losing accreditation and thus not allowing social work students to become licensed to offer critical behavioral health services in Ohio.

I urge you to please oppose SB 1. This legislation harms students, faculty, and the integrity of higher education and puts the social work workforce at risk. Please stand for academic freedom and vote NO.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Grenier

CPRS // CFPS // CDCA

