

Chairwoman Roegner, esteemed members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I appreciate your time and your commitment to hearing the voices of those who will be directly affected by Senate Bill 1.

My name is Ari Faber, and I am an alumnus of Ohio University. When I first arrived in Athens, the Pride Center was instrumental in helping me find a sense of community in a new city after being kicked out for being queer. Today, I serve as the Executive Director of United Campus Ministry, a nonprofit that has supported students at Ohio University for over 50 years. In fact, the student group that would later become the Pride Center got its start at United Campus Ministry. We continue to support students, but we do not have the capacity to fulfill the critical role that the Pride Center, Women's Center, and Multicultural Center currently provide. If SB1 is enacted, the students who rely on these resources will not receive the same level of support, and that will have lasting consequences.

Senate Bill 1 proposes eliminating funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at our public universities, but these programs are not about exclusion or indoctrination. They are about ensuring that every student, regardless of background, feels welcome, safe, and supported in their pursuit of higher education. Without these programs, students who are already at a higher risk of dropping out—including first-generation students, students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and students from low-income backgrounds—will face even greater barriers to success. These resources provide mentorship, community-building, and access to crucial academic and mental health support. Taking them away does not make our universities more neutral; it makes them less accessible and less equipped to serve the diverse student body that already exists.

Ohio University has long been a leader in fostering a diverse and inclusive campus, and dismantling these programs would not only harm students but also weaken the reputation and competitiveness of our institutions. Colleges across the country are working to attract the best and brightest students, and a strong commitment to inclusion is a key factor in a university's ability to recruit top talent. Without these programs, Ohio will struggle to compete with universities in other states, leading to declining enrollment, fewer research opportunities, and a brain drain as students and faculty choose to build their futures elsewhere.

Beyond its impact on student services, SB1 also undermines the rights of university faculty and staff by banning faculty strikes. We should be strengthening labor unions and protections for workers, not stripping them of their right to collective action. Faculty strikes are not taken lightly; they are a last resort when fair wages, working conditions, and academic integrity are at stake. Silencing educators in this way threatens the quality of higher education in Ohio and discourages talented faculty from staying in our state. When faculty are underpaid, overworked, and denied the right to negotiate for fair conditions, it affects students directly—professors have less time and energy to dedicate to their teaching, research opportunities shrink, and the overall quality of education declines.

The students who come to Ohio's universities are not just earning degrees; they are building their futures and contributing to our communities. Many graduates stay in Ohio, becoming our

teachers, doctors, engineers, business owners, and civic leaders. Weakening their support systems and suppressing workers' rights sends a clear message that we do not value them. It makes Ohio a less attractive place to study, work, and live.

I urge you to consider the long-term harm that SB1 would cause. It does not make our universities stronger—it makes them less competitive, less supportive, and less equipped to serve the students and workers who drive our state forward. I ask you to stand in opposition to this bill and to advocate for policies that truly strengthen Ohio's higher education system.

Thank you for your time.