

February 10, 2025
The Honorable Kristina D. Roeger, Chairwoman
Senate Higher Education Committee, Ohio Senate
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written opposition on Senate Bill 1: the Advance Ohio Higher Education Act.

My name is Hannah Jaqua, and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. I write today on my own behalf and not as a representative of my university.

SB 1 is of interest of me because it implies that free speech is not already an option in higher education. I have been in multiple (5 to be exact) classes that may fit under the “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” umbrella, and there was no clear agenda to change anyone’s mind in these classes. These courses took place in various departments as well, including LGBTQ+ Studies, Black History, Psychology, Sociology, and Counseling. Each of these five domains (as well as countless others) educate students on the entire history of a culture, and that should not be censored. These classes made it clear that everyone is entitled to their own opinions and to share them; that is what this country is built on. However, what is not tolerated, is sharing statements of hate. This country should *not* tolerate that.

Educating on a culture is not a left-winged agenda. Having well-rounded knowledge on the strengths and shortcomings is what allows individuals to make complete decisions for themselves. Learning about Black history or LGBTQ+ culture is not persuasive or favoring a culture, it is allowing the upcoming generations in our country to fully understand the actions of generations prior. It is to help us *not* repeat history, and this bill would be doing so.

The language that I find most troubling is “Controversial Beliefs or Policies” and “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” falling under this. Why are conversations regarding diversity controversial? Why is it scary for individuals to have the opportunity to be educated on the history of a race? How is it a crime to treat everyone equally, regardless of their identity? This is history repeating itself, and I implore you to consider this.

My educational history would not be as rich if I had not learned about the various cultures I listed previously. I am currently enrolled in a Diversity course in which I will be travelling to a Mosque, which is something I have never done before. Culture is what keeps this country moving. Diversity brings us together. I beg you to consider this when considering SB 1. Our upcoming generations DESERVE a well-rounded education, they deserve to make decisions for themselves. This bill will not allow them to do so. This bill will hinder them from learning about various cultures, from making decisions on their own, even though the wording deceptively seems otherwise.

In conclusion, I implore you to oppose SB 1 for all of the reasons described above.

I appreciate your consideration of these concerns and encourage you to vote accordingly.
Thank you,
Hannah Jaqua