

Testimony on behalf of the Association for Counselor Education & Supervision
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Chair Roegner
February 6, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

My name is Cassie Storlie and I am a professor of Counselor Education and Supervision in Ohio and I also serve as the 2024-2025 President of the national Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES). I do not represent Kent State University but am submitting testimony on behalf of ACES in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1.

We are gravely concerned about the details in the SB 1 and its effect on the current and future faculty workforce in the state of Ohio, including the ability to educate the adult students in our Ohio colleges and universities on professional counseling. Please see the following statement and testimony on behalf of ACES:

The Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) strongly opposes recent legislation proposed in the Ohio Senate. Not only does Ohio Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) undermine the expertise of faculty with expertise in shaping education to professional counselors, it reflects a growing trend of legislative efforts to restrict discussions of race, gender, and other systemic inequities in education. By targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, SB 1 threatens to undermine efforts to create inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and supported, regardless of their background. ACES does NOT support this legislation and stands in solidarity with our members in Ohio, the Ohio Counseling Association (OCA), the Ohio School Counselor Association (OSCA), the Ohio Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (OACES) whose membership consists of Ohio counselor educators, professional counseling students, and Ohioans from all intersecting backgrounds.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are essential for ensuring that individuals from minoritized and diverse communities receive the support they need to succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and are aligned with the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) *Code of Ethics*, the American School Counseling Association (ACSA, 2022) *Ethical Standards* and Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2023) *Standards*. By banning DEI-related programs, this bill contradicts the fundamental mission of counselor education, which is to prepare all counselors and our students for success in an increasingly diverse society (see CACREP, 2023, Section 3).

Further, this legislation pressures educators to avoid discussions on systemic inequalities which has a chilling effect on academic freedom, weakening students' ability to develop critical thinking skills (skills more employers are requesting from their applicants) and engage in complex social issues. Additionally, SB 1 could have long-term negative effects on Ohio's ability to attract and retain quality educators, students and community partners. As a state who has a strong professional identity for professional counselors, SB 1 could unravel the decades of work to establish licensure alongside strong curricular standards.

The proponents of this legislation and similar legislation across the country promote the false narrative that college students are being threatened with reprisals by professors or administrators if they exercise their right to free speech. This false narrative creates distrust in our institutions of higher education and threatens academic freedom, open discussion, and the open marketplace of ideas that are paramount to the learning process.

SB 1 also raises serious concerns regarding the rights of educators and public sector employees by potentially limiting their ability to strike. Educator unions play a crucial role in advocating for fair wages, better working conditions, and policies that enhance student learning. By restricting the ability of unions to strike, SB 1 undermines collective bargaining power and weakens educators' ability to stand up for necessary changes in schools. Stripping this right

threatens the overall quality of education by allowing policymakers to impose unfavorable conditions without meaningful resistance. This legislation further tilts the balance of power toward political leaders and away from the professionals who are directly responsible for shaping the future of Ohio's counselors.

Sincerely submitted on behalf of the Association for Counselor Education & Supervision,

Cassie Storlie, PhD, LPCC-S, NCC

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