

Opponent Testimony for SB 1 – Written-Only
Senate Higher Education Committee
February 9, 2025

Natalie A. Noyes
Constituent from Lancaster, Ohio
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor

Chair Roegner, Member Timken, Member Reineke, and Members of the Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee;

Thank you for considering my testimony. My name is Natalie A. Noyes and I am a lifelong resident of Ohio. I practiced law for seven years before switching careers and I am now an independently licensed professional clinical counselor. I attended Ohio schools for both my undergraduate and law degrees. **I strongly oppose SB 1 and ask you to vote NO.**

As a licensed professional clinical counselor (LPCC) in Ohio, I am required to adhere to ethical and legal guidelines set forth by the State and to complete an accredited master's program. The primary accrediting body for counselors is the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). In order to be CACREP compliant, counseling programs must include elements of social and cultural identities and experiences. My primary concern with SB 1 is the language which centers around the removal of supposed "controversial beliefs or policies". Under the present language, most of what I was required to learn as part of my counselor training would fall under these "controversial beliefs and policies".

My counseling education required me to learn important statistics about counseling in many cultures and how to best help my clients while being mindful of their many identities. In learning critical theories, which are also targeted by SB 1, I never once felt shamed for my race or sex, as the language of this bill suggests. The work I did in the classroom, which offered a wide variety of perspectives, challenged my mind and made me a better counselor in the therapy room. The removal of these educational tools, deemed essential for counselors, could cause Ohio programs to lose their accreditation and cause students to seek out educational opportunities outside the state. Additionally, these restrictions might cause esteemed faculty members to seek employment and conduct their research out of state, thus costing Ohio excellent educators and students.

I consider myself a lifelong learner and while I understand not all learning happens in the halls of a college or university, that is where this bill is focused. Having gone through four years of undergraduate education, three years of law school, and two years of a master's program, I have never once felt the beliefs of my professors or of other speakers in the class were pushed upon me. In fact, I have fond memories of debates in class, and in extracurricular activities, where I was forced to put myself in the shoes of someone with the opposite viewpoint. The "intellectual diversity" mentioned in SB 1 is already present in our classrooms. Denying discussion or conversation will never yield an outcome of true intellectual diversity.

Ohio students and professors deserve to have genuine discourse on topics, without undue state interference. I ask you to consider my testimony and **vote NO on this harmful bill.**

Natalie A. Noyes

JD, LPCC