

My name is Carrie D'Agostino and I live in Greene County Ohio with my husband and our three kids. If you don't have a teen or preteen in your life right now, you may not be aware that the word "Ohio" has been claimed by Gen Z & Gen Alpha kids. Ohio is now synonymous with something that is lame, weird, or cringeworthy. Kids from around the world, who have never stepped foot in Hocking Hills State Park or toured the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, now use the word "Ohio" to dog on their friends because supposedly Ohio is such a lame, weird, cringeworthy place to live.

I don't understand this reputation. My family and I have lived all over the world and we chose to settle in Ohio. Ohio has 4 beautiful seasons. We have Cuyahoga Valley National Park. We have over 1500 miles of bike paths. We are the roller coaster capital of the world, for goodness sake. How did we get tagged as "cringe"?

I'm worried Ohio might be living up to that reputation. Senate Bill 1 threatens to cement Ohio's reputation as a place that is out of touch and regressive. Not only does the bill prevent faculty from their right to strike should working conditions become untenable, but this bill aims to eliminate DEI in higher education. How can you defend such a stance? You can't say "the founders treasured diversity" in the same argument to eliminate programs designed to promote diversity. You say "you want every student in Ohio, regardless of race, gender, or religion to be able to pursue their choice of post-secondary education". Do you know what that describes? Equity. Equity in education. You raise the alarm on declining enrollment numbers in colleges and universities across the country. You say this bill is the answer. How does eliminating inclusion programs drive those numbers up? It's a contradiction in terms. I have serious concerns that what this bill claims to do is the very opposite of what it will actually do, were it to pass.

If you want to argue that DEI initiatives somehow stifle freedom of speech, I challenge you to explain how, when these programs do no such thing. Senator Cirino, you've spoken about fewer high school graduates and rising cost of education due to inflation. But you've failed to make a valid argument about how DEI programs are connected. Unless that's what you meant about "unnecessary infrastructure requirements" and if that's the case, I wish you would just say that you object to campuses having curb cuts and ramps for the disabled or automatic soap dispensers that respond to darker skin tones. I want you to explain how enrollment numbers will improve by making Ohio campuses less accessible, less inclusive. You can't distract me with words like "woke" and "indoctrination" from the fact that your quest to protect freedom of speech is just a blatant attempt to protect only the speech you agree with.

Senate Koehler, as my representative, I want to take a moment to personally thank you for supporting a cause that is very near and dear to my heart. I understand you are a gold level sponsor of Autumn Trails Stables, an adaptive riding center in Springfield, OH. If you're unfamiliar, Autumn Trails is a wonderful organization that uses the power of the horse to provide physical, mental, and emotional benefits to kids and adults with special needs. But Senator, how do you rectify supporting both Autumn Trails, an organization whose core foundation is equal access to the equine experience and inclusion of people with a diverse range of abilities, and this bill? How do you rectify helping to subsidize this incredibly worthy program while actively

working against the people who utilize it? Because the DEI initiatives you plan to eliminate support the accessibility, understanding, and acceptance of this group of people as they try to navigate their college experience, if they even get the chance. I urge you to think about the hypocrisy.

I'm proud to live in Ohio. I think this is a unique opportunity to take back what "Ohio" means. It should mean bold. It should mean brave. If you want to demonstrate loyalty, show your loyalty to the people of Ohio. Don't kowtow to higher ups and to the latest buzz word which is just another codename for hate and exclusion.

Thank you.