

My name is Dr. Deborah Amend. I am an Ohio citizen, disability and adoption advocate, and Assistant Professor of Special Education. Today I am writing to state my personal and strong opposition to S.B. 1, "State Institutions of Higher Education" that is being placed before this body. As a disability advocate, former classroom teacher and special educator, and current professor of special education, I can testify to the damage that this legislation will do to higher education in Ohio. It is devastating and extremely short sighted.

It appears that this legislation was written by individuals who have no understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, especially from the disability standpoint. They also appear to have zero understanding that changes in policies regarding hiring with diversity, equity and inclusion will impact them and their loved ones. 1 in 4 Americans are a part of the Disability community, and most of those disabilities are acquired. They seem to be unaware that disability is a state we are all headed towards through life, and in their zeal for control, they push past the realities of their own situations. Someday, they, too, will need these protections.

As someone who has served on hiring committees, and fully understands these initiatives, I understand that the candidates must be qualified for the positions they are applying for, and DEI initiatives only serve to ensure they are being considered despite the many biases in our hiring practices. This legislation will remove diverse voices from our college campuses, and will limit the education of Ohio's students. I am firmly against the prohibition of DEI in hiring.

Additionally, it is not the purview of the state to get involved in the ideologies and practices of individual institutions regarding what is taught, and what is required for graduation. There are accreditation boards which serve that purpose with integrity and understanding. The idea of higher education is to offer the students opportunities to develop higher level thinking skills, based on truth in research, and use those as foundational to developing their professional skills. Actual freedom, which this legislation is not pursuing, would allow students to choose their higher learning institution based on what they saw as the best fit for their career or goals. This requires a diversity of thinking that this legislation will demolish, of which the writers appear to be afraid.

It is not the place of the state to determine what those ideologies are that are presented at a university. Furthermore, it is not the place of the state to use college curriculum to force students to learn a particular party's idea of "civics". Requiring additional coursework in biased ideology, while looking to reduce the length of a bachelor's degree is ripe with the idea of controlling the masses through ignorance. Rather than looking at what is driving the outrageous costs of higher education in Ohio, this legislation is pretending that reducing the coursework by a year (while increasing indoctrination in the area of civics) is an attempt to solve this problem. I am wholeheartedly opposed to this legislation.

Additionally, I am concerned that this "civics" course will purposely leave out the truth of our history, specifically disability history. It is not in the best interest of those proposing this legislation that people know the connections between the US eugenics movement and Nazi Germany, or that factions of the right have consistently fought against supports for people with

disabilities, including the Americans with Disabilities Action, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This legislation has the potential for harming those among our citizens that are most vulnerable by perpetuating the myths that all of American history is good and we have nothing to learn from it.

I hope that this body will see this thinly veiled attempt at gaining control of our youth, rendering our next generations unable to think critically and causing the demise of our state institutions for what it is and vote, resoundingly, against S.B. 1.