

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Roy Jack Yeomans II, and I have dedicated the past ten years of my professional career to higher education. Since separating honorably from the United States Air Force, I have been privileged to work directly with students to support their academic success. I hold a Master of Education in Student Affairs in Higher Education, and my professional roles at the colleges where I have been employed have focused on helping students – especially those from marginalized backgrounds – navigate the challenges of college and find success in their academic goals. I am writing today to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1 and its companion bill, House Bill 6.

This bill is a direct attack on the principles that make higher education a transformative experience for all students. As someone who has worked in student support services, I have seen firsthand how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs provide critical resources for students from underrepresented communities, including veterans, first-generation college students, LGBTQ+ individuals, and students of color. Removing these programs does not create fairness. Instead, it strips away essential support systems that help students succeed in an already challenging environment. I know what it's like to navigate these institutions as a first-generation college student and a veteran, and I have seen how these initiatives provide students with the same opportunities for success that I was fortunate to receive.

Furthermore, the restriction on scholarships that consider diversity factors is an unnecessary and harmful measure. Many students, particularly first-generation college students, BIPOC students, and LGBTQ+ students, rely on these scholarships to access education that would otherwise be out of reach. This bill effectively removes pathways to success for the very students Ohio should be working to uplift.

SB1 also threatens academic freedom and faculty autonomy by inserting political ideology into hiring, curriculum decisions, and tenure review. Higher education should be a space where critical thinking, open inquiry, and diverse perspectives are encouraged—not restricted by government mandates. This bill places unnecessary burdens on universities, pushing them toward bureaucratic oversight instead of fostering an environment where students can engage in meaningful intellectual exploration.

I urge this committee to recognize the harm this bill will cause to Ohio's students, faculty, and institutions. As someone who has served my country and spent my career in education, I cannot stand by while policies like this dismantle the very support systems that enable students to thrive. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and regressive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Roy Yeomans II