

Good afternoon Chair Roegner and members of the Higher Education Committee. My name is Kendra Asiedu, and I am a proud graduate of THE Ohio State University, a fellow of Planned Parenthood of Advocates of Ohio, and a staunch opponent of this bill Senate Bill 1.

It was the great American writer, feminist, and civil rights activist, Audre Lorde, who said, "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences". I stand before you today because this legislation is the political symbolism of our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate our differences. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; true intellectualism; and the right to withhold work when academic experts- who are Ohio workers- are not being cared for, are Ohio's strengths and makes the Buckeye state stronger.

Universities are already a time for academic exploration, and a diversity of thought, experience, and community; This bill will not prompt intellectualism but rather pushes misinformation for a time budding in different facets of information in the guise of free speech which is already constitutionally protected. I am proud of my time at Ohio State University because it challenged me morally and academically. It grew my sense of community, allowing me to build community with people from Appalachian Ohio to Pakistan; Our universities are some of the best because of the opportunities and have created those building blocks for a more equitable world that, we the youth want to see.

For Ohio to be the economic juggernaut that it can be, our population must have diverse opportunities that uplift all people- but especially our marginalized. This legislation will have devastating effects that will be detrimental for decades to come. It will de-incentivize programs

that uplift those from rural and low-income communities going to universities like my alma mater; it would weaken the knowledge of the talent that Ohio can obtain and retain; and would gut our teaching workforces because this bill removes their American-given right to strike.

Chair, as you said, “Higher education is, without a doubt, one of the most powerful tools that we have to ensure the continued success and progress of our society. As legislators, we must ensure that our public higher education institutions uphold the standard of excellence that enables our graduates to thrive in their chosen fields”. However, this legislation will deteriorate the most powerful tool that Ohio has, its education system, while limiting the diverse opportunities that students obtain to further themselves academically and in their work.

Ohio is stronger because of its natural diversity of thought, people, and equitable opportunity. Passing this legislation would be a disservice to the future of Ohio’s educational system and landscape.

Chair and member of the Higher Education Committee, everyone here, the people of Ohio, and myself in this room urge you not to support this deeply unpopular bill.

I am happy to direct any questions the committee members may have to Planned Parenthood’s Advocates of Ohio Director of Public Policy Advocacy Danielle Firsich.