

## Senate Bill 1 Opposition Testimony

Chairwoman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am an employee at Ohio's largest public university, but I'm speaking as an individual whose life has been transformed by the institution I now work for.

In high school, when it came time to apply for college, I applied to only one place, because I believed in its reputation, its commitment to academic excellence, and its legacy of providing opportunity for students from all walks of life.

I was fortunate to receive a full tuition scholarship, based on both academic merit and economic need, which made it possible for me to attend college without the crushing debt.

After completing my undergraduate degree in 2019 **I made the decision to stay at this institution** to pursue my master's. As a grad student, I assisted with research on the experiences of female faculty in agricultural colleges and explored attitudes toward mental health in agricultural education.

When I graduated with my master's in 2021, **I stayed again**, accepting a grant-funded position as an instructional designer developing low-cost, accessible, workforce development courses for Ohioans, eventually moving into a permanent role.

And last year when I was recruited by a private company outside Ohio, **I chose to stay**. Because I believe in the work I do here.

I love this state and its public universities, **and I want to stay**. But if Senate Bill 1 passes, for the first time in my life, I will feel ashamed to do so.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are not about discrimination or exclusion, but about creating a campus where every individual, regardless of their background, feels empowered to succeed. I have seen firsthand the power of diverse voices coming together to challenge conventional thinking and generate creative solutions.

SB 1 directly undermines its own stated goal - intellectual diversity. This bill would, in fact, suppress the diverse ideas and perspectives that allow our institutions to thrive. And SB 1's attack on collective bargaining will hinder our ability to attract and retain top talent. We will lose experts and thought leaders—the very people who make our universities competitive on a global stage—the talent that drives innovation, advances research, and contributes to our economy.

In my time at university, I never once felt my ideas were unwelcome or less than, no matter their political leaning. I was taught to think critically and to make up my own mind. It's the professors I trust to teach and to remain impartial in their approach.

I ask that you consider the implications of this bill. It's not just students, faculty, and staff you'll be letting down, but all Ohioans who benefit from university research, engagement, and outreach. People like me will be pushed out. And Ohio still needs people like me.

Thank you.