

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 Jin Merlyn Litman. I am a first-generation fourth-year undergraduate college student in Cleveland, Ohio, where I am currently studying for my BFA in Animation. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

I am a neurodivergent black American who has come from a very financially unstable family, and has been shielded by a lot of the knowledge of the world and how it works, due to my parents either fearing for what would happen to me if I were to learn of this knowledge, or because of barriers outside of my control, such as finances or qualifications that I do not or cannot meet. When I first announced to my mother that I decided to go to college, they were very concerned for me. Because I am neurodivergent, I was put in special-education classes my entire K-12 life. My special-education classes have severely underestimate my intellectual potential, as well as my classmates, and I have often been taught material several grades behind me. It is because of this that I have not learned much of American history and political topics (aside from the basics). This has caused me to become rather ignorant and naive of the general American political climate for many, many years of life, and oblivious as to how me and my actions could either help or delay causes that I may or may not support, whether through direct action such as testifying at a public hearing (as I am currently doing in this testimony paper), working occupations that directly help the causes I support, or directly educating others. When I first announced to my mother that I wanted to go to a traditional four-year college, something that no one in my family has successfully done, my mother was very worried for me, as being someone who is black, neurodivergent, LGBTQ+, and very ignorant of how the world worked at the time, my mother did not think I had what it took to break that glass ceiling and undertake that opportunity. But despite that apprehension, I have taken that leap. And it was one of the greatest decisions I've made for myself, as the education I've been provided at my college has been some of the most enlightening learning experiences that I have ever gotten, even the ones that are deemed controversial, and especially even some of the ones that I myself may have personally disagreed with to some extent. Learning all of this will be an extremely vital asset to me as someone who wishes to pursue a career in the creative industry. I truly believe what I have learned has deeply improved both my personal character, as well as my ability to fully participate in my civic duties as both an Ohioan resident, and an American citizen. Abolishing the right for this type of education to exist hurts so many people, past, present and future. Many professors and teachers could lose their jobs. Colleges would have to massively overhaul what type of education they could provide, causing unintended or unforeseen chaos within the student body. Because of the stunted education, students and recent graduates might not have as much as the skills, and especially critical thinking, needed in order to fully unlock their potential in some of their jobs, and could even indirectly affect citizens and Ohio-specific political progress and climate.

I implore you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this very harmful and regressive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.