

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 Audrey, and I am a fourth-year student at the University of Cincinnati, studying Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Political Science. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6 and seek to outline a few of my concerns.

Throughout my time at the University of Cincinnati as both a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies student and a Political Science student, I have had the privilege of learning about the long history of injustices that have occurred here in the United States, and their relation to the issues that continue to transpire. I strongly believe that having learned about many of these issues, has better prepared me for my future plans to go to law school, and has provided me a better understanding of the world around me. SB 1 has the potential to directly undermine this, by defining a controversial belief or topic as “any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, and abortion” (Sec. 3345.0217, Lines 600-604). This could potentially limit the ability for educators to teach about any historical topics deemed “controversial.” For example, educators would be unable to correct students who deny the holocaust occurred. These dangerous provisions in SB 1 will make it impossible to teach about historical events, which is pertinent to students’ understanding of society and current issues transpiring today.

My second concern is that this bill completely ignores current inequality and injustices occurring in our communities and undermines students’ and educators’ abilities to address these issues. The bill requires that institutions “Treat all faculty, staff, and students as individuals, hold every individual to equal standards, and provide those individuals with equality of opportunity with regard to those individuals’ race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression” (Sec. 3345.88, Lines 1205-1209), yet the reality of the matter is that this is impossible to do so while prohibiting the teaching of any resources that can help us to reach a place of equal treatment. SB 1 undermines these resources, by prohibiting the teaching of any diversity, equity, and inclusion framework. How are we to reach a place of “equality” if we are prohibited from learning why injustice occurs, and how we should work to fix these issues? Arguing that you want everyone to be treated the same way while refusing to provide students with the resources to address these issues is simply antidotal and senseless.

I find this bill to be both illogical and contradictory. While the intent seems to be to preserve student intellectual freedom, it diminishes educators’ abilities to teach about important issues and historical events which are essential to informing our understanding of society and building a conscious. And while the bill seems to advocate for equal treatment of people, it then removes the resources that will help us to advocate for those being actively discriminated against.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this adverse bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.