

Testimony of Colton Wolf
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair
February 9th, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Colton Wolf, and I am a student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. I do not represent Miami University, where I have attended for 4 years, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

Senate Bill 1 does not represent the values of Ohioans, nor does it actually promote intellectual diversity, but inhibits it. As a college student studying theatre and English, intellectual diversity is paramount to our ethos as humanities students: we read and write to understand the human condition and recapture it, which includes human experiences that are outside our own. Of the tenets brought forth by Sec. 3345.0216, none really differ from the current policies of most public undergraduate institutions in the United States and Ohio – the section is *redundant*. Yet, there seems to be a need to define these practices in contention with DEI & A programs that Sec. 3345.0217 seeks to dismantle. The definition brought forth by paragraph 2 of Sec. 3345.0217 for the term “intellectual diversity” is “...multiple, divergent, and varied perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues.” Somehow, though incredibly unclear and vague, DEI & A programs are at odds with enforcing intellectual diversity – if intellectual diversity is meant to incorporate and challenge many modes of thought, why would theories behind DEI & A programs and courses not be considered material whose “...primary function is to practice, or support the practice, discovery, improvement, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge and citizenship education by means of research, teaching, discussion, and debate,” as described within the bill? Who are DEI & A programs harming?

In my experience, DEI & A programs have been integral to achieving a college education as a first-generation college, commuter, and a historically low-income student. I have received scholarships, state and federal grants, as well as general support by the DEI & A programs offered by Miami University and the State, and without them, I would not have been able to afford or attend college. To me, the gutting of DEI & A programs and courses directly opposes the goal of democracy and an educated citizenry capable of engaging in intellectual diversity – what you are not exposed to, you are ignorant to, thus uneducated about. DEI & A programs draw students in, and without them, they will literally exclude or push students away from in-state education

(especially when higher education costs in Ohio are higher than the national average), and would be against the state's interest, as higher education enrollment steadily falls for the 11th year in a row. In the words of Sophocles from his play *Antigone*, "A man, though wise, should never be ashamed of learning more, and must unbend his mind." Senators, I beg you to learn more, not less.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this dangerous bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.