

Testimony for the Record
Submitted to the Senate Higher Education Committee
For the 2nd Hearing of Senate Bill 1

February 11, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

My name is Amanda Manahan, and I have lived for several years in Ohio working as a public historian and educator for a nonprofit organization. Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. I stand firmly against Senate Bill 1 (and its companion bill HB 6) because it undermines the fundamental principles of academic freedom, inclusion, and critical thinking that are essential to a thriving democracy. This bill does not promote intellectual freedom; rather, it allows a select few—most of whom are not educators—to arbitrarily decide what can be taught and how it can be taught, effectively shutting down conversations that lead to innovation.

This bill's attack on DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion) programs is not just an attack on higher education—it is an attack on the values of fairness and opportunity that should define our state. Ohio has been a bastion of public education since its earliest days, and historic institutions such as Oberlin College and Wilberforce University were early leaders in universal education. Are we to turn our backs on this celebrated legacy; this early form of DEI? By restricting how universities address diversity and banning faculty from engaging with so-called "controversial" topics, this bill ensures that students will be less prepared to engage with the realities of the world. Additionally, threatening university funding based on ideological standards is a blatant attempt to force institutions into political submission. This is not how we build a strong, inclusive, and forward-thinking Ohio.

Beyond its impact on academic integrity, SB 1 will have devastating consequences for Ohio's economy. Our state is already aging, and if passed, this legislation will drive young adults—our economic future—elsewhere in search of better educational and employment opportunities. This will harm industries that rely on well-educated graduates, including K-12 schools, medical facilities, tech companies, and countless others. It makes no economic sense.

This bill does a great disservice to young Ohioans by implying that students lack the ability to think critically for themselves. Universities do not indoctrinate; they create opportunities for individuals to expand their knowledge and perspectives. I implore this committee to listen to the voices of students, educators, and community members and to reject this dangerous piece of legislation. Please do your part to preserve educational freedom and the future of Ohio by opposing SB 1.

Thank you.