

Testimony of Quentin Kelly
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee
Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair
February 9, 2025

My name is Quentin Kelly, and I am a first-year student at the University of Cincinnati. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1 due to the way that it would prevent professors from being able to do their jobs effectively, as well as the fact that it would make it more difficult for students with diverse backgrounds to get a college education.

It is very important for professors to teach students to be able to form their own opinions, and I am very grateful for the professors I have had who have done this. In fact, some of the best professors I've had are open about their beliefs, even if they are ones I don't agree with! None of those professors have ever told me that my beliefs are wrong and that theirs are right, but rather they have explained why they feel the way they do and have encouraged me to form my own opinions. Their explanations of their beliefs have helped me gain a better understanding of the topics they are discussing, especially since these professors have had strong understandings of multiple viewpoints. However, if Senate Bill 1 passes, other students will be unable to learn about these topics in the way that I have.

Another issue with Senate Bill 1 is that it seeks to prevent professors from endorsing or opposing controversial topics without defining what qualifies as a controversial topic. The bill does define some of these topics, however it does not give any restrictions on what else would be considered controversial. This would make it so that professors cannot effectively plan course materials, since what counts as controversial varies from person to person. This lack of clarity about what can and cannot be said in a classroom would make it difficult for professors to create engaging and thought provoking lessons since they would instead be worrying that a well-meaning lesson might be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular belief.

As an example, a history class might discuss the Great Depression, yet if actions from politicians in the 1920s are referenced as causes, that could be seen as controversial. Senate Bill 1 would make it difficult for the teacher to effectively discuss the causes of the Great Depression.

Senate Bill 1 also seeks to eliminate departments and funding related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. One of the duties of the University of Cincinnati's Office of Equity and Inclusion is to respond to allegations of discrimination or harassment. I know multiple students who are parts of minorities, and I've been able to see first-hand the positive effects of having an office dedicated to ensuring that they feel safe on campus and that they are able to have the same opportunities as other students. Nobody should have less opportunities available just because of who they are or what their background is.

I am studying Civil Engineering, which is a profession with a much higher percentage of men compared to women. I am very grateful to be studying at a school that encourages diversity. In our first-year engineering and design thinking class, we were taught that the first step of the design thinking process is to empathize. This is important, since engineers cannot come up with a solution to a problem if they do not understand who is being affected by the problem. Being able to collaborate with people who have diverse backgrounds is especially helpful when trying to empathize, since it means I am working with people who view the world differently from me and who are able to understand problems differently than I am. Getting rid of efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools will discourage these people from seeking higher education, which will have an overall negative impact on society, since the next generation of people in the workforce will not be able to empathize as effectively.

I am very thankful that I have had professors, friends, and other people in my life who have different perspectives from me. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on Senate Bill 1 so that other people can continue to be exposed to different viewpoints. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Quentin Kelly