

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1
The Senate Higher Education Committee
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Kyan Dyar

I am writing today to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1. At a time when our country and communities are more divided than ever, it is shameful to see our state government prioritizing the dismantling of equity and the erosion of safe spaces for those who have long struggled to find belonging.

SB-1 poses a direct threat to the progress that we have made toward fostering inclusive practices. Inclusion is not about meeting this superficial “diversity quota” – it is about building stronger, more resilient communities by embracing a variety of perspectives and lived experiences. True inclusion ensures that solutions benefit everyone, and not just the majority, who have historically faced fewer systemic barriers and challenges.

Defunding programs that promote diversity and provide critical resources for underrepresented students will only harm us in the long run. The notion that those who benefit from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs receive undeserved “handouts” is not only misguided but also dangerously ignorant of why equity exists in the first place. Equity is not an unfair advantage – it is a necessary corrective to a history in which opportunities were disproportionately accessible to a privileged few.

While DEI programs are designed to uplift individuals who have been historically overlooked, they are rarely exclusionary to any one demographic. These initiatives do not even the playing field at the expense of diminishing opportunities for others, but instead work to ensure that resources, mentorship, and support systems are available to all who need them. Any student – regardless of race, gender, or background, who faces obstacles in their pursuit of higher education can benefit from these programs. The goal is not division but the creation of a more equitable society where success is not limited to those with a systemic advantage.

These programs have been life-changing for me and have provided me with both the resources and the community to realize my dreams of becoming an engineer. Although I come from a background that has given me the education and the access to pursuing a degree, I have faced several setbacks that I would not have been able to overcome without initiatives at Ohio State that offer support for students like me.

I urge lawmakers to recognize that a more inclusive and equitable society benefits *all* of us. By opposing SB-1, we affirm our commitment to a future where success is not dictated by privilege but by the potential and determination of every individual. Providing resources for those who deserve a chance to pursue a degree and build a community is not just an investment in their future – it is an investment in a society that thrives when all people have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the world around them.