

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 Alice Somers. I am a fifth-year undergraduate student at the University of Cincinnati. I am currently working to get my Bachelors of Science in Education for Elementary Education and a Deaf Studies Certificate. I am also a proud union member of the Ohio Education Association, acting as the Underclassman Member at Large for the Aspiring Educators Board of Directors. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

Governor Mike DeWine has placed a great emphasis on education throughout the state of Ohio, specifically on ensuring that K-12 students get access to highly qualified educators. In my time, I have found that a highly qualified teacher is not just someone that knows the ins and outs of curriculum and state standards. In fact, I personally believe that the teachers who incorporate students' cultures and are mindful of each student's circumstances are the most qualified to teach. As a future educator, I have seen the impact that cultural representation has had on students, both in PK-12 and higher education. According to Dr. DeLeon Gray, "When students feel a sense of belonging in the classroom, it can increase their educational success and motivational outcomes in multiple ways". Dr. Gray is a professor of Educational Psychology and Equity, having earned his Masters and Doctorate degree from the Ohio State University.

In Ohio's Learning Standards for Social Studies, one of the civic participation and skills strands for fourth graders reads as follows on page 19: "Civic participation in a democratic society requires individuals to make informed and reasoned decisions by accessing, evaluating and using information effectively to engage in compromise". In SB 1 Sec. 3345.0217 it states that "'Controversial belief or policy' means 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, or abortion" (21). As a future educator, I am expected to teach my students, per Ohio's Model Curriculum from the Department of Education, how to "make informed and reasoned decisions using various digital and non-digital sources to evaluate information critically" (43). I whole-heartedly believe that college students should be held to the same standard and be expected to evaluate information critically.

Members of the Higher Education Committee, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this extremist bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.