

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 CT. I am a graduate student and scientist. I am representing myself, as a private citizen, in opposition to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6. I believe that these proposed bills do a disservice to the state and people of Ohio, and it is short-sighted to enact policies that limit our ability to innovate, educate, and facilitate.

While I find the entire contents of both bills troubling, I focus my testimony specifically on Section 3345.0217, as it pertains to “controversial beliefs and policies.” These so-called “controversial beliefs and policies” are not given any criteria on how they are delineated, and appear to be chosen out of a political candy grab bag. It is truly puzzling to see a list of unrelated topics ranging in scope from international (foreign policy) to personal (marriage and abortion). This suggests to me that the choice of these topics represents a personal agenda of politicians, rather than the needs of the people of Ohio. What is discussed in the classroom should not be at the hands of politicians, who are so often divorced from the reality of the common people, but rather trained educators, who have dedicated their lives to the pursuit of knowledge and shepherding the next generation. Learning that extreme weather events impact different populations differently across our nation should not be controversial; yet, under the language of this bill, such “climate science policies” are considered as so.

I would also like to take a moment to discuss another troubling aspect of this bill. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is often used as a buzzword by politicians, and rarely unpacked to truly understand the meaning. These so-called “DEI” services impact the entirety of college populations: from students in rural communities, to veterans, to continuing education students, to first generation students, and beyond. It is embarrassing that this Committee thinks that it is appropriate to deny entire student populations access to university services because they are afraid of a buzzword they cannot define. It is also embarrassing that a narrow definition of intellectual diversity is what the Committee instead chooses to embrace - which seems to be used to silence, rather than encourage, dialogue. We are stronger as a state, and country, when we embrace our diverse strengths and talents to create a better nation for us all. It is not “woke” to hope that all students, regardless of their income, background, or zip code, are given what they need to be successful and allowed to bring their entire humanity to the classroom. It is what I hope every educator carries in their heart.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill. Thank you again for your time, and the opportunity to testify.

Best regards,

CT