

Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1 (SB 1). While I appreciate the intent to address certain governance and operational issues within state agencies, I am deeply concerned about the provisions in this bill that undermine diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. These provisions will have a profoundly negative impact on marginalized communities and will hinder Ohio's ability to foster a fair and equitable society.

SB 1 includes language that effectively eliminates DEI programs and training within state agencies. This exclusion is not only regressive but also harmful to the progress Ohio has made in creating inclusive environments for all its residents. DEI initiatives are essential tools for addressing systemic inequities, promoting understanding, and ensuring that historically marginalized communities have access to opportunities.

By dismantling these programs, SB 1 sends a clear message that the state is no longer committed to addressing the barriers faced by people of color, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups. This is not just a symbolic loss; it will have real-world consequences for Ohioans who rely on these programs to level the playing field in education, employment, and public services.

Marginalized communities already face significant challenges in accessing resources, opportunities, and fair treatment. DEI initiatives are critical in addressing these disparities by:

1. **Promoting Representation:** DEI programs ensure that state agencies reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Without these efforts, we risk perpetuating homogeneous leadership and decision-making bodies that fail to consider the needs of all Ohioans.
2. **Reducing Bias:** Training programs on implicit bias and cultural competency help employees recognize and address their own prejudices, leading to fairer treatment of marginalized groups. Eliminating these trainings will allow unconscious biases to go unchecked, further entrenching systemic inequities.
3. **Creating Inclusive Spaces:** DEI initiatives foster environments where individuals from all backgrounds feel valued and respected. Without these efforts, workplaces and public institutions may become unwelcoming or even hostile to those who do not fit the majority mold.

The removal of DEI programs will disproportionately harm communities that have historically been excluded from full participation in society. It will widen existing gaps in

access to education, employment, and healthcare, and it will stifle the voices of those who are already underrepresented.

Beyond the immediate harm to marginalized communities, SB 1 undermines Ohio's ability to compete in a diverse and globalized economy. Businesses and organizations increasingly prioritize diversity and inclusion as key drivers of innovation and success. By rolling back DEI efforts, Ohio risks sending a message that it is not a welcoming place for diverse talent, which could deter investment and economic growth.

Furthermore, this bill contradicts the values of fairness and equality that many Ohioans hold dear. It is a step backward in our collective journey toward a more just and inclusive society.

I urge you to reconsider the provisions in SB 1 that exclude diversity and inclusion efforts. Rather than dismantling these critical programs, Ohio should be expanding them to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to thrive. Marginalized communities deserve more than empty promises—they deserve concrete actions that address systemic inequities and create a more equitable future for everyone.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I strongly oppose SB 1 and urge you to reject this harmful legislation.

Sincerely,

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