

MOLLY FLORIMONTE

B.S. Communication Studies | Ohio University Scripps College

Testimony in OPPOSITION of Senate Bill 1

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 Molly Florimonte. I write to you as an individual and not a representative of any organization or institution. I am a recent first-generation college graduate of Ohio University from Cincinnati, Ohio, and I strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

As a young girl growing up in the Cincinnati Public School district, with parents who worked at Skyline Chili, and grandparents who had spent decades in their roles at Kroger, I felt a sense of pride for being from Ohio. Although no one in my family had been to college, they encouraged me to work hard, receive the highest honors in school, and make my dream of attending university a reality. I was dead-set on attending school in New York City, even applying to several institutions in the city during the fall of my senior year. That is when an educator at my high school told me about Ohio University, and all that Athens had to offer. I researched the scholarships, diverse programming, and inclusive culture that OU had to offer and quickly changed my mind. Ohio was home, and I gave up my dream to move to NYC to pursue an education here.

If OU did not have programs such as their multicultural centers, specific scholarships, DEI roles in student and campus organizations, I would not have been able to attend. This is the story for many Ohioans.

On Campus, I was able to serve in a VP of DEI position that opened doors for not only myself to connect with the community and further my education outside of my courses, but allowed students of color to receive valuable mentorship, provided students with disabilities essential accommodations, and so much more. In this position I saw a 300% increase in student committee engagement and membership. The students were excited to participate and learn more. Our events brought in additional funding to local businesses and university organizations. DEI changed my life and allowed me to have an education those before me did not.

If this attack on higher education were to take place, if the educators who championed me throughout my journey at OU will not be permitted to strike or have freedom of choice in their classrooms (per their constitutional rights), myself and students like me, will be forced to take our expertise to other institutions in states that reflect our values. This bill is dangerous and will set our state on a path Ohioans do not wish to see. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this extremely harmful and destructive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.



Molly Florimonte