

Hello,

My name is Jennifer Prewitt, and I am a student at The Ohio State University. I am writing in opposition of Senate Bill 1, or the “Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act,” introduced for the 136th Ohio General Assembly.

I was born and raised in the foothills of Appalachia Ohio, in Pike County. Universities did not come to recruit students at my high school. Rather, the military had nearly permanent booths setup in our cafeteria, recruiting eager young teens who were desperate for a future, convinced that there was only one path to said future. To so many outside the region, we were simply bodies, not minds.

In 2022, The Columbus Dispatch ran an article about the college graduation rates of students from rural communities, primarily throughout the Appalachia region in the state. 27%. The graduation rate for Appalachian students, who had already defied the odds by making it to college, was 27% - 3% below the state average. Through the Morrill Scholars Program and Cunningham Appalachian Student Scholarship at Ohio State, students from the region, or other marginalized communities and groups, are able to rise above financial and other socio-economic burdens to attend college. To be a mind. To think that SB1 may strip these programs that recruit some of the finest future leaders all because they are giving a chance to those who have had so few chances is ludicrous and heinous. To villainize raising up the citizens of Ohio, or any citizen for that matter, inherently goes against the mission of the Land Grant institution by which our state’s largest university came to exist. And goes against the ideals of any higher education institution, for that matter.

When these students arrive at their universities under SB1, they are then told there are guidelines by which they can discuss their experience. That their experiences may be “controversial beliefs.” That the systems by which they have lived without certain opportunities don’t exist. This is invalidating, dehumanizing, and quite frankly, evil. It does not serve the students of this state. It does not encourage intellectual growth or progress. It *does* turn away talented individuals who will choose to school elsewhere, instead of submitting themselves to the subservience of SB1.

I am proud to defy odds every day. I am proud to be a student of Ohio State. I am proud to cultivate the tools needed to improve my home county in the state that has shaped me. I hope that I can continue this cultivation in pursuit of intellectual freedom and mature, humanized discourse that exists without SB1.

Thank you.