

My name is Olivia Moody, and I am a student at the University of Cincinnati. I am testifying in opposition to SB 1 on behalf of myself, not on behalf of my university.

I am involved as a General Mentor within a program known as PRISM at the UC LGBTQ+ Center. As a mentor, I have had the privilege of meeting many students within our community and hearing the stories of their experiences as young LGBTQ+ individuals. I have co-facilitated an affinity group that offers a space for those identifying as bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and/or aromantic, as well as their allies, to be themselves and have important conversations. Each week we get the opportunity to speak about topics such as what it's like to be part of these communities, how we can support one another, and how we can find hope in times where it's tougher to be ourselves.

This is one of those times.

On the outside, it may seem difficult to understand why we need programs like these. I implore those against them to try to understand that they do not exist to give special privileges to minority students; they exist to give the exiled a space, to give the knocked-down a fair shot. I have met students that have little to no relationship with their parents, students that have been disowned by their family, students that have suffered trauma from the abuse they've experienced... all for being who they are. The key similarity between them? All of them, every single one, has told me what a blessing it is to have found community within programs like ours.

So many of them, including myself, have met our closest friends through the Center. I speak for many of us when I say that I've never felt safer or more at home with a group of people. If each identity office closed, hundreds of minority students—if not thousands, as this includes women—would lose critical resources and community. Banning all DEI would be a massive setback, especially because many of these identity-based resources have existed in some form since the 90s.

A university should be a place for people to have debates, open themselves up to new experiences, hear stories completely different from their own, and have the freedom to speak up on issues they care about. SB 1 is a massive overreach and infringes on our basic rights to free speech and to a peaceful existence.

I urge you to hear the voices of Ohioans and oppose this legislation. Thank you.