

Testimony for the Record
Submitted to the Senate Higher Education Committee
For the 2nd Hearing of Senate Bill 1
February 11, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

My name is Joseph Cross and I am an Ohio resident living in Lorain County and currently working as a medical professional at a Cleveland teaching hospital. I stand firmly against Senate Bill 1 (and its companion bill HB6) because it undermines the fundamental principles of academic freedom, inclusion, and critical thinking that are essential to a thriving democracy. Passing this Bill will irreparably damage our economy by hampering the quality of our state's education, as well as our ability to attract high-performing professionals after graduation. In addition, enacting these statutes will be a hindrance to providing quality medical care to millions of Ohioans due to an inability to hire and retain quality medical staff.

This bill's attack on DEI programs is not just an attack on higher education—it is an attack on the values of fairness and opportunity that should define our state. By restricting how universities address diversity and banning faculty from engaging with so-called "controversial" topics, this bill ensures that students will be less prepared to engage with the realities of the world. This piece of legislation also implies that our state's students lack the potential to engage in critical thinking. SB1 would limit the opportunities for Ohio graduates to expand their knowledge and perspectives, as well as reduce the prestige and lower the reputation of our state's universities.

Threatening university funding based on ideological standards is also a blatant attempt to force institutions into political submission. This is not how we build a strong, inclusive, and forward-thinking Ohio. I implore this committee to listen to the voices of students, educators, and community members and to reject this dangerous piece of legislation. Please do your part to ensure a prosperous future for Ohio by rejecting SB1.

Thank you for your time.