

Testimony of Catherine Marshall

Before the Senate Higher Education Committee

Senator Kristina D. Roegner, Chair

February 9, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Higher Education Committee.

My name is Catherine Marshall, and I write this testimony as a private citizen of Ohio in opposition to Senate Bill 1. I believe it is a deeply un-American bill, that represents an overreach of government power, limits free speech, and misunderstands the values of this nation.

Senate Bill 1 seeks to eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion programming and offices at colleges and universities throughout the state. This is a massive overreach of government power. Limited government is one of the core beliefs upon which this country was founded. Attempting to have the government intervene and tell schools how they can and cannot operate is profoundly un-American. It is a massive encroachment on the “intellectual diversity” that this bill is aiming to support. This bill aims to have students form their own opinions on controversial issues, but seeks to eliminate the avenues through which students and school officials could become educated on those issues. If this bill is passed, the students may be able to form their opinions, but they would not be informed opinions. The goals of this bill in theory and the goals of this bill in practice are fundamentally at odds with each other.

Furthermore, this bill, in its attempt to downplay America’s diversity, rejects one of the great truths of this nation. When I was growing up, I was taught that America is a great cultural

“melting pot”. Everything from my elementary school history classes to the Schoolhouse Rock VHS tapes my mom showed my siblings and me reinforced this idea. It encouraged me to look around at the people I knew, and appreciate how we were different, and how we were alike. Some came from different countries, practiced different religions, had different skin colors, or spoke different languages, but we were all Americans. Diversity is not division, it is unification. It is not some new weakness, it is a foundational American strength.

Finally, the programs and offices that this bill would shut down are important to the schools where they exist. I attended the University of Cincinnati from the Fall of 2020 to the Spring of 2024. During that time, I came out as a transgender woman. The LGBTQ Center at the University of Cincinnati was an invaluable resource as I began my transition. At a time where I felt less understood than ever, when I could not find the words to describe how I felt, I met people who understood me. It was genuinely powerful to know that I was not alone. A large reason I felt safe coming out as transgender is because I knew that I would be supported. I knew there was a branch of my university that would help me when I needed it. I knew they would protect me from the dangers I would otherwise have faced. I genuinely do not know what I would have done without my university’s LGBTQ Center. I do not know who I would be. I spent most of my time at college as a recluse, afraid to talk to anyone, or do anything. I did not go to parties, I could not make friends, I did not know how to exist. I was largely miserable. The LGBTQ Center, and the people that I met there, helped me to come out of my shell. I rediscovered what it meant to be myself. Please, think back to your college years and the experiences you had. Could you imagine not having them? Think of the people you met who changed your life. Who would you be if you hadn’t met them? I promise, my life would be far duller if the University of Cincinnati’s LGBTQ Center did not exist. My story is also only one of

many. For me it was the LGBTQ Center, for others it was the Women's Center or Ethnic Programs and Services. These are invaluable resources for the students that use them. They protect marginalized and vulnerable communities. They build communities. Senate Bill 1 would erase them. I implore you, vote no.