

Opponent Testimony for SB 1
Senate Higher Education Committee
February 10, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Senate Higher Education Committee members, thank you for reviewing my testimony today. My name is Tiffany Berman, and I am a mother of three, an educator for nearly two decades, and a third-year doctoral student in Educational Studies at the University of Cincinnati. It is important to note that I am not officially representing the university today; I am writing this testimony as a concerned citizen of Ohio. I hold a background in early childhood, elementary, and special education. As an educator and a parent, I am writing to request that you do not support this bill. In the upcoming paragraphs, I will offer my perspective on my serious concerns related to this legislation.

SB 1 places limitations on the use of diversity, equity, and inclusion within universities. While I recognize and understand the desire to ensure merit when making decisions for admissions and scholarships, I believe these limitations are too broad and will negatively impact the university's ability to build partnerships in communities and local school districts. For example, as a doctoral student, I have been working on a solution to help meet the needs of school districts experiencing significant population increases due to legal immigration. My solution has used grant funding to connect undergraduate international students who speak multiple languages and have experience working as tutors with schools needing support for English language learners. This program has been very successful locally, reducing the load on teachers, increasing children's comfort level, allowing for an improved focus on academics, and leading to positive skill development for university students. Unfortunately, this type of program falls under diversity, equity, and inclusion. The second phase of this program has been paused while the state considers SB 1. Although exceptions to grant funding are provided within the bill with approvals from the chancellor, this is likely to cause significant delays to the process of funding grants. In this instance, schools have been left without a support structure that benefits the local school district and the university students.

As an educator and a parent, I implore you to consider that broad bans on diversity, equity, and inclusion may have unintended consequences that harm your constituents, their families, and our education system.

I ask that you vote no on SB 1.

Thank you for reviewing my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Tiffany Berman