

Opponent Testimony for SB1
”Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act”
Senate Higher Education Committee

2/10/2025
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Graduate Student

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee,

My name is Adara Turek. I am a current graduate student at the university of Akron and instructor of an Introduction to Psychology course. I do not represent The University of Akron, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen, who happens to be a student and an instructor, in opposition to Senate Bill 1. My testimony will be focusing on opposition regarding the parts of SB1 addressing diversity statements.

I am a student, an instructor, a queer advocate, but most importantly a member of the Akron community. One that has seen the lasting positive impacts of diversity statements and the positive culture that they create. In addition to being a student, I am a queer student. Diversity statements have given me feelings of belonging, they have increased my rapport with my professors. As a student, I learn much more productively in spaces where I feel that I belong, and diversity statements on syllabi made by my professors have made me feel safe, they have made me feel seen, and like I belong. I recognize that I am extremely privileged in the fact that I am very straight passing, I am white, English is my first language. It is important to recognize that privilege and that these statements mean so much more to those who are also members of marginalized communities.

As an instructor I am terrified for my students who will be negatively impacted by this bill. Stereotype threat is the idea that negative views of certain groups of people can have drastic impacts on performance and mental health for those that believe in the stereotypes regarding the groups that they are members of. Evidence has shown that being aware of racial stereotypes has had negative impacts on black student’s test performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Statements of diversity and inclusion help to reduce that stereotype threat as students tend to perform better if they feel like they belong. I want my students with different backgrounds from me to feel comfortable coming to me with help, and the diversity and inclusion statements

let them know that I care about them. Diversity and inclusion breeds empathy not preferential treatment.

This bill would negatively impact other queer students. The minority stress model (Meyer, 2003), postulates that those with minority identities experience heightened levels of stress compared to those not belonging to those groups. This can have negative impacts on health and emotional wellbeing. These statements of diversity help to reduce some of that stress for queer students in the classroom by fostering feelings of belonging. Learning environments should feel like a safe space for students, regardless of their background, especially when college can be daunting for people of marginalized communities. and statements of diversity and inclusion make that possible.

I am testifying as a student, an instructor and a queer individual who will negatively impacted by this bill and who has students that will be negatively impacted by this bill. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no on SB1.

CLOSE:

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions.