

Against Ohio Senate Bill 1: Advance Ohio Higher Education Act

2/10/2025

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

My name is Madison Wesley, and I am a 4th year student studying Medical Sciences at the University of Cincinnati. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Ohio Senate Bill 1. I believe this bill poses significant threats to the quality and equity of higher education in Ohio.

I am a proud, lifelong resident of Cincinnati, Ohio, and a first-generation college student. The University of Cincinnati and its dedicated faculty have opened doors for my future that I never imagined could be within reach. Growing up as the oldest of four daughters, I was always told to set a good example, and striving to pursue a higher education became a crucial part of my early identity. My journey began in high school, where College Credit Plus (CCP) courses made college more accessible to me and piqued my interest in science. That early exposure ignited my passion for medicine and set me on the path to becoming a physician. Today, I am part of the Connections BS/MD program, which has made my dream of becoming a doctor a reality. This program is specifically designed for students interested in addressing health disparities through community engagement and who are serious about a career in medicine. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral to being a good physician. Understanding and respecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of patients is not optional—it must be taught to students as an essential part of their education. Without it, we risk producing healthcare professionals who are ill-equipped to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

When I graduate from the University of Cincinnati's College of Medicine, I will effectively be a "DEI doctor" being a first-generation college student and a member of an underrepresented community.

Without programs such as Connections that believed in my intellectual abilities and passion regardless of

my identity, I would not be on the career path that I am on today. My goal has always been to help people, and I believe that through my work, I will be able to make my community a better, healthier place.

However, the implications of this bill could prevent students from similar backgrounds—students with the passion and potential to transform their communities—from accessing the resources and support that helped me get to where I am today. This legislation not only threatens to limit opportunities for future healthcare professionals from diverse backgrounds but may also deter other bright minds from pursuing an education at the University of Cincinnati and other public institutions across Ohio. If passed, it risks stripping higher education of this diversity, stifling innovation, and weakening the very fabric of our communities.

Ohio Senate Bill 1 threatens to undermine the core values of higher education—academic freedom, diversity, and intellectual exploration. I respectfully urge the members of this committee to reject this bill and protect the integrity and quality of higher education in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Madison Wesley

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