

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Emily Sanderell. I am a proud Ohio college graduate, a current graduate level student, and a full-time working museum educator. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

My undergraduate years were unequivocally some of the best and most transformative years of my life so far. I grew up in a rural community in Southeast Ohio and entering into a unique academic university atmosphere not only increased my knowledge and skills so that I could join the workforce but also opened my heart to the wider world around me and the enormous range of people who live in it. Institutions of higher education are incredible safe places where young adults who are just starting to discover who they are and who they want to be are encouraged to be creative, think critically, and most importantly, learn to disagree. This bill endangers that safety by regulating what professors and students can think and say.

Under the guise of “full intellectual diversity” this bill professes to protect students by removing all DEI initiatives and job protections for university faculty and staff. My question is, how can you promote diversity while actively removing it? This bill is not about diversity, it is about fear of difference. As a history major and educator I can tell you this, diversity is not re-writing history. Diversity is the acknowledgement that there are more ways to experience life than our own and having compassion for those different experiences. No one, in higher education or otherwise, is arguing that the stories of Western culture don’t matter or that white Americans should feel shame because of the past. Diversity efforts at the post-secondary level are simply attempts to include the voices of people who are already here in our communities so that students and future leaders can feel included and continue to make Ohio a place of kindness, welcome, and innovation for all of its citizens.

I am proud to be a product of this state’s education and higher education systems. I am proud to be the daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter of Ohio teachers. However, with each of these harmful bills that you pass you are slowly destroying an education system that has been the envy other states and nations for decades. You are destroying an education system that has produced great minds such Maya Lin, Charity Adams Earley, John Glenn and, numerous others. And more than that, you are hurting real Ohioans right now and, countless generations of future students by not teaching them how to disagree effectively, how to think critically and, how to have compassion for those with different life experiences. You will harm all of us if you pass this bill because by doing so you would be telling Ohio’s college students and future leaders that their stories, thoughts, and opinions don’t matter as much as your own.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this horrendously destructive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.