

February 9, 2025
Testimony of Delia M. Sosa, MS, MD Candidate
Senate Bill 1

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1. My name is Delia Sosa, and I am a third year medical student in the state of Ohio.

When I was in high school, I was accepted into my top choice for college, an Ivy+ university that was among the top five colleges in the United States. I had worked my entire life to get into this school, from staying up all night to study, to serving as president of the science honor society and captain of the swim team, to volunteering and doing research in my free time. I had gone beyond what was expected of me to be able to attend my dream college, and I was proud of the work I had done. That is, until someone told me I had only gotten into that college because I am Latino.

That moment was when the phenomenon of imposter syndrome began to set in. I questioned whether it was, in fact, my hard work that had earned me a seat in my college's class of 2019, or whether it was the simple fact that I am Latino. I spent all four years of college, plus two years of graduate school and now three years of medical school, questioning whether I had actually earned my seat, whether I was actually adequate enough. The only times I was truly able to grasp that I had, in fact, earned my place in each of these phases of education, was interacting with the DEI offices at each of these schools. Being in community with other students from marginalized backgrounds, who shared similar experiences of being told they received a spot in their class because of identity rather than merit, was what helped me remember how hard I had worked to get there.

Besides being a medical student, I am also proudly transgender, intersex, Latino, and Indigenous. The intersection of each of these identities makes me what we call a multiple minority, meaning I hold several marginalized identities which have been historically underrepresented in many spaces, including medicine. DEI is not intended to take space away from people who have earned a place in higher education. It is intended to ensure that people, like me, whose communities have not been adequately represented in higher education have a fair chance to pursue college and graduate studies and succeed in their educational pursuits despite biases and decreased access to resources to prepare them for higher education.

Bans on DEI in higher education would harm all students who are underrepresented in higher education, but even further, it would harm all Ohioans. Bans on DEI would prevent medical schools from adequately preparing the next generation of physicians to care for patients from all walks of life and to provide appropriately individualized care. We know that patients from certain marginalized communities have higher rates of adverse health outcomes and/or more risk factors for certain illnesses, and marginalized communities

experience higher rates of medical mistreatment, mistrust, and distrust in healthcare. Preventing medical students from learning about these marginalized communities by banning DEI in higher education would increase the rates of minority stress, complications of chronic illnesses, and healthcare costs because we would not be adequately trained to recognize and address risk factors and indicators of illness in marginalized communities.

I implore you, not just for Ohio's higher education students but for every Ohioan who will be treated by the next generation of physicians, do not pass Senate Bill 1. It has the potential to do much more harm than good to the health and well-being of Ohioans.