

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 1

To the Chairman and members of the Committee,

My name is Joele Newman, and I am a second-year law student at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. I am also President of UC Law's Black Law Students Association (BLSA), a student organization that promotes increased Black and other Minority representation in the legal field. I staunchly oppose Ohio Senate Bill 1.

As an Illinois native, I first came to Ohio to pursue higher education at an Ohio public institution. I attended Miami University and, upon graduating, have remained in Ohio for the last 7 years. When I decided to return to higher education to pursue my Juris Doctor, I was especially excited to attend another Ohio public university for my legal education. Despite many offers to attend law school out of Ohio, I was drawn specifically to UC Law because of my vested interest in the Cincinnati community, the state of Ohio, and the opportunities Ohio public higher education had previously offered me.

As a student of the law, it is imperative for one's learning and betterment as a professional that we know how to engage with a broad range of views and perspectives. Specifically at UC Law, the most valuable pieces of my education have been tied to the experiences of my classmates that are unlike my own. Knowledge gleaned from my classmates that are older, younger, from different states, different countries, different religions, and different ethnicities. As we are living in times where legal access is difficult for many and dwindling, not only is it vital that more people are trained to become attorneys, but that all attorneys are trained to understand clients' perspectives and experiences, even when clients have different backgrounds, views, or beliefs than our own. This is the beauty and benefit of a diverse legal classroom, where all insights, backgrounds, and lived experiences are shared, voiced, and valued.

The passage of Senate Bill 1 would severely undercut headways that public institutions have made to offer access to a legal education where it was previously denied. As the granddaughter of Mississippi sharecroppers, who all were unable to finish their high school educations, one even stopping at the 3rd-grade level, because of several barriers impacting their access to education, I consider it a privilege and an honor that I'm not only able to access higher education but pursue a professional degree that will equip me to serve my own community, and other communities in dire need of legal access. An ending of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts would thwart stories and professional trajectories like mine.

For the foregoing reasons, I oppose Senate Bill 1 and request that this Committee not support its passage.

Sincerely,  
Joele Newman