

Hello 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 Mickayla Nelson and I am a social work student at The Ohio State University. I am testifying today to oppose companion bills SB 1 & HB 6. This legislation says it is meant to enhance Ohio's higher education, but instead, it threatens academic freedom by putting too much power into the hands of politicians.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion do not limit intellectual diversity but, by their very nature, increase it by ensuring that everyone has a seat at the table to share and expand perspectives. This bill's banning of DEI will hurt the standing of Ohio's higher education institutions and, more importantly, students such as myself. I plan on continuing my educational journey in social work by earning my MSW. If this bill is passed, and Ohio universities lose their accreditation, this may force me among others to look elsewhere for work or move out of state. These bans on "controversial topics" also put entire programs at risk such as social work.

As a social work student and a future licensed Social Worker, I am especially concerned about its impact on social work programs' ability to maintain accreditation. Social work program accreditation by CSWE requires content in diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure that social workers can practice effectively with clients of all backgrounds, belief systems, and identities. I am deeply concerned that the passage of this legislation would result in social work programs losing accreditation and thus not allowing social work students to become licensed to offer critical behavioral health services in the state of Ohio.

I urge you to oppose SB 1 & HB 6. This legislation harms students, faculty, and the integrity of higher education and puts the social work workforce at risk. Please stand for academic freedom and vote NO.