

Opponent Testimony for SB 1
Senate Higher Education Committee
11 February 2025

Darren M Raymond
Citizen

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Darren Raymond. I am an Air Force Veteran and first year student at The Ohio State University studying Public Management, Leadership, and Policy. I am speaking today in opposition to the Advance Ohio Education Act due to the inclusion of provisions prohibiting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs, requiring intellectual diversity--as it is defined in the bill--and regarding how controversial beliefs are to be treated by staff and faculty.

I joined the Air Force out of high school seeking financial independence and a pathway to civic duty through education and service. While I served I had the opportunity to meet the gamut of what America has to offer. Everyone has a unique set of challenges and histories that lead them to service, and that diversity of perspectives leads to innovative solutions to complicated problems. I was put in positions where I had to assist my superiors and inferiors alike when the difficulties of life reared their head. I saw stupid mistakes that could have ended careers turned into opportunities for development (and sometimes a new base, a change of scenery if you will) that never would have been offered to most, but was necessary for that individual at that time. The squeaky wheel gets the oil as the saying goes. Though there was never any resentment. Those paths all got us to success. I got back to Ohio after my five years and got myself wrapped up into a philosophy class that changed the direction of my life. I had decided that I was going to return to the military to continue learning that side of government when that class got me thinking about the issues right here in my home, my Ohio. I changed majors to public policy and found that many if not all of my classes require discussion of those controversial beliefs. A class I am taking now on Equity, Justice, and Public Service brings attention to procedural fairness, access, quality, and outcomes in applying and writing policy. I find these ideas especially poignant in regards to this bill.

I ask the committee to consider how this bill may affect access to education for a veteran who has been out of academia for five years with little meaningful credit to show. I ask you to consider the quality of education for degrees such as mine when staff and faculty must toe the line--fearing loss of funding or tenure at the expense of a student complaint. Lastly I ask you to consider the outcomes that might be seen when opportunity is denied to those victims of circumstance who could have been great. The implementation of this bill could provide the tools to dismantle many great opportunities.

In closing, while I am sure the intentions of this bill are pure and solely for the furtherance of education for all Ohioans, it will dismantle many systems that provide just that. A diversity of ideas exists in my education--a diversity of individuals providing their insight. I ask you to vote no in favor of preserving opportunity for Ohioans.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions.