

Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Olivia Montgomery, and I am profoundly concerned about the potential impacts of SB1.

I am a second-year student at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. I chose to come to UC's law school because of their dedication to public interest and community. This bill directly inhibits the university and law school's ability to foster a diverse and welcoming community. As a white student from rural West Virginia, I was not fortunate enough to experience a classroom full of diverse people and viewpoints until I sat in my first law school class. I have been profoundly impacted by my classmates and their experiences. Having a class full of folks who have lived a life terribly different from my own has led to lively debates and considerations of the impacts of the legal principles we discuss in ways that I truly never would have considered if not for the opportunity to interact with people different from myself.

Beyond the pragmatic benefits of a diverse and inclusive body of students, this bill is also irreconcilable with the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Art. I, Section XI of the Ohio Constitution. I am particularly concerned with the bans on professors discussing policies or beliefs that subject to "political controversy." Such a content-based regulation cannot be permissible without a compelling governmental interest and means narrowly tailored to achieving such said interest. Seeing as free speech of those facilitating conversation only adds to discourse and aids students in coming to a reasoned conclusion, I can not see how this rule would actually allow students to come to their own conclusions about such topics. Lively debate is truly the only way to develop legitimate and informed opinions.

I wanted to make my life here and possibly be a law professor myself someday; I am no longer sure that Ohio is the state for me.