

Testimony of Dana Miller
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee,
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair
February 11th, 2025

Chair 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 Dana Miller. I have lived in Ohio for 13 years and come to you today as a citizen. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1.

I believe in the freedom to learn rather than the misguided freedom from learning this legislation proposes.

The best we can hope for is a nation of lifelong learners with open minds and the courage to act, stop us from repeating toxic patterns, and have the skills to at least recognize the coup against our democracy going on at this moment.

This legislation makes it clear you don't want educated people. That is why you are at war with higher education. You want to create people who are only educated enough to keep our emerging amoral, oligarchic, kleptocratic theocracy going.

This legislation looks like what we saw starting in 1877 at the end of the Reconstruction era, and we entered the illusion of the Lost Cause and Jim Crow racial terror.

You can't legislate what people learn.

You can't legislate what happened in the past.

You can't legislate what people remember.

But you can legislate fear.

But people will remember this legislation, and it will be just as stained as the Jim Crow period legislation.

You are trying to legislate a free pass once again for our white and adjacently aligned society to turn a blind eye to our flawed origins, favor willful ignorance, and provide a balm to the conscience of those who believe we can move headlong into the future without understanding and reconciling the past.

I have learned recently that before the Civil War, my family owned human beings in Mississippi and profited from their labor and the pain of their family separation. I know these slave

descendants still have my family name. Now, I understand why summer family reunions are so important in the black community.

Do I feel guilty? No.

Have I benefited in a material way? Not really.

Did I learn a divisive concept? I don't think so.

But I know I have more freedom. I can travel almost anywhere in this country without fear for my life. This freedom of mobility is not experienced by many people who look and sound different than me.

Knowing my family's history has motivated me to learn more about our past to understand, empathize, and respect people different from me. This new knowledge allows me to move forward, be more self-aware, and have more self-respect. There is some painful pride in knowing the truth.

If you don't know your own or your country's past, you hand your narrative over to somebody else's conspiracy theories.

This legislation has been outsourced to partisan think tanks populated by highly educated people who know better. Your agenda has a stark, white purity only interested in power. This tactic has been tried before but will eventually fail because this country is too large and diverse now to reign it in with this kind of weakness in the guise of your temporal power. The truth is legislation like this makes many young people not want to live here.

The legislation you propose would obliterate intellectual diversity and remove the opportunity for future generations to understand their place in history and how they can contribute.

A country with any self-respect would provide its youth with an honest education rather than fodder for a fantasy and a fake life of false pride while huddling in fear.

Please consider my testimony and vote NO on the ghastly Senate Bill 1.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.