

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

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify. My name is Seth Josephson. I am a PhD graduate from OSU in the Department of Comparative Studies and I currently teach in that department as well as working for the Columbus library system. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

I am troubled by the threat to Free Speech in the recent turn against DEI education. The values of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are the bedrock of just and free society. They are also core to the citizen-building mission of the humanities. To oppose DEI programs is to stand on the wrong side of history.

My university education in the humanities was not an “indoctrination” but a broadening of perspective that allowed me to see outside of my own narrow upbringing. I was encouraged to see issues from multiple angles and to make my own decisions about what was most in line with my moral values. Forbidding DEI education does nothing to help students grow, but only reduces the range of ideas they are exposed to. Forbidding DEI programs also violates the constitutional right to Free Speech for educators.

As an educator, and as a father, I hope that my children and future generations will have the opportunity to think beyond their own particular privileges and disadvantages to see the rich, and diverse, tapestry of human life. I want them to understand the value of equity, not just supposedly neutral “equal opportunities.” And I want them to feel included and to help others to experience inclusion despite different of race, religion, sexuality, country of origin, etc.

The criticism of DEI programs does not come from a good faith understanding. Rather, this attack on DEI programs is rooted in a self-interested conspiracy theory intended to undermine trust in initiatives that seek to improve society. Opponents of DEI programs have been misled by those want our country to be less tolerant and more prejudiced. DEI programs have flaws, but a good faith approach would be to improve these programs so that they could be a greater benefit for all participants. SB1, instead, seeks to silence voices and put an end to free debate. SB1, if enforceable, would hurt public universities and the public they serve.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify,

Seth Josephson, PhD