

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Eddie Bautista Garcia, and I am a first-generation, Mexican-American 4th year at The Ohio State University. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 1.

It's a necessity for historically underrepresented groups to have a higher education, but what we often forget is that higher education needs us. We cannot learn without our institutions, and they cannot learn without us. Every university — but especially Ohio universities — needs our disparate perspectives and voices because what is a higher education institution if not a space for us to develop our capacities to lead better lives. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION enhance our ability to work with one another. To understand each other. To empathize.

From the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to respective departments that honor divergent voices and stories, Ohio State benefits from having a cornucopia of racial and ethnic identities. Thus, we **MUST** protect DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION work in the state of Ohio. Personally, I could not have attended this university if NOT for Ohio State's Morrill Scholarship Program, which awards academically-talented students who are committed to uplifting and supporting diversity and inclusion. Like many other Morrill Scholars, I was not handed this scholarship; I was not gifted this scholarship because of my identity. I **earned** it through my hard work, both academically and personally.

And, if this bill passes, **YOU WOULD BE SLAMMING THE DOOR** in the faces of students like me — in fact, students who surpass me in talent, intellect, and capacity. Students who deserve to attend institutions like Ohio State. This bill fails to address inequities in higher education — instead, it **creates** them. How does this bill create meritocracy if you rip necessary resources away from **HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED** students? We are capable of success, but there are systemic barriers preventing our full access — diversity, equity, and inclusion **ADDRESS** these barriers.

Furthermore, I wouldn't be able to **HELP** my university broaden its undergraduate pool if not for this university's DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION resources and supporters. It is people in Diversity and Inclusion who have helped me persevere at the best school in Ohio — that is also a predominantly white institution — and become a better person with each day. Without DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION, historically underrepresented groups may not have voices or as powerful a presence as we should because we

worked very hard to get here — we worked hard to attend university, and if Ohio dismisses DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION programs, how many of us can no longer attend these institutions? How many of us will have scholarships, programs, spaces invalidated if YOU dismiss Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion? Without us, higher education cannot function.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion allow us to have an equal opportunity at success within a system that was not originally built for us. This bill misrepresents diversity, equity, and inclusion as indoctrination and fails to even define those 3 terms, because the reality is that they are for our betterment, not detriment.

So, I ask you: Are you proud of creating more barriers for Black, Brown, Asian, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized students who work their hardest, facing roadblocks that our white peers don't need to *think* about, just because you are uncomfortable?

You represent us. If you pass this bill, the resulting failure will be on you.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful, dangerous bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I will now take any questions if you have any.