

Testimony of Matthew Hollander, Ph.D.  
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee  
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair  
February 11, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Matthew Hollander, and I am a professor of sociology at Marion Technical College, where I have taught for six years. I do not represent Marion Technical College (MTC), but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

My testimony is informed by my professional experience as an educator teaching diversity at the two-year college level in central Ohio, specifically MTC's Ethnic and Cultural Diversity course. It is a fact that the U.S. is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse societies in the world. The MTC course is taken by students training to work in nursing and healthcare, policing and criminal justice, business, social work, manufacturing, and other fields. I see our course as serving students by educating them both for citizenship and for working life. The course develops their ability to interact with fellow citizens and co-workers in mutually beneficial ways, and to recognize what they have in common with people who are different from themselves.

The vast majority of students in the MTC course are non-Hispanic whites from historically Protestant Christian rural areas and smaller cities who have had little opportunity to interact with significant numbers of nonwhites and non-Protestants. SB1, by imposing a blanket DEI ban in Ohio higher education, is likely to harm such students by limiting their familiarity with other social groups. The MTC course familiarizes students with the histories and cultures of a variety of groups, challenging students to empathize with people who differ from themselves. For our aspiring nurses, police officers, entrepreneurs, social workers, and technicians, SB1 is likely to reduce their practical diversity competence in interacting with the diverse populations that they will encounter in real life, both as fellow citizens and on the job.

The point about diversity competence and education for citizenship is especially important. Although the bill proposes a new course in American civic literacy (LSC Analysis, p. 6; SB1 text, p. 28), SB1 will likely have the ironic effect of limiting our students' understanding of U.S. history, impairing their practical competence in interacting with fellow citizens of diverse backgrounds. That is, the bill seems likely to lead to misunderstandings and ignorance about important dimensions of American society and its many economic, political, and social connections with other nations.

I wish to make a final point about SB1's implicit values. The bill's language is seemingly value-neutral, while characterizing DEI programs as value-based and constraining students' intellectual choices. However, it is clear that the bill advocates certain values such as intellectual diversity. Likewise, it opposes and prohibits "support and training for certain concepts": nine such concepts are listed (LSC Analysis, p. 14). That is, it mandates limitations to intellectual diversity by prohibiting some kinds of views on race and gender. My point is that, simply because DEI

programs deal not only with facts but also with values, does not make them inappropriate in higher education. Both education and law, per se, are grounded in certain social, political, and economic values. Though seemingly neutral, SB1 is informed by values that seek to express, in particular, white grievance: the claim that the true victims in race relations are whites rather than nonwhites. The genealogy of the bill's colorblind language for expressing white grievance is very old in the U.S., dating back to the 1800s and Reconstruction.