

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sarah Hoffer, and I am a licensed social worker (LSW) residing in Holgate, Ohio, currently working toward my LISW credential. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1.

While this bill claims to enhance Ohio's higher education, it, in fact, undermines academic freedom by concentrating excessive power in the hands of politicians. Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are vital for promoting intellectual diversity and ensuring that all voices contribute to the academic discourse. The proposed restrictions on DEI not only constrain the exchange of ideas but also jeopardize the standing of Ohio's higher education institutions and the well-being of its students.

I am particularly concerned about the impact on social work programs. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) mandates that accredited programs include robust DEI content to prepare practitioners to effectively serve clients from diverse backgrounds, belief systems, and identities. Should this legislation be passed, it could jeopardize the accreditation of social work programs, thereby hindering social work students from obtaining the necessary credentials to provide critical behavioral health services in our community.

"The future Ohio that I envision has the best, most robust behavioral health workforce in the country – a workforce that is hailed as heroic and valued as a vital part of our healthcare system." - Governor Mike DeWine, State of the State Address, March 23, 2022. According to Workforce Supply and Demand within Ohio's Behavioral Health System, "as of CY2019 Social workers make up the largest portion of licensed professionals at 31%, just 7% of the population is made up of physicians" ([Workforce Supply and Demand within Ohio's Behavioral Health System | DataOhio](#)). How will Ohio continue to meet the demands for social workers, if Ohio residents attending Ohio higher education programs cannot be licensed due to lack of accreditation?

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose SB 1. Upholding academic freedom and preserving the integrity of higher education are essential for fostering an inclusive and dynamic learning environment. Please consider the long-term implications for students, faculty, and the broader community, and vote no on this legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hoffer, LSW

