

Opponents of higher education, anti-DEI Senate Bill 1 cleared to collect signatures in Ohio

Opponents of Senate Bill 1, which bans DEI programs and impacts tenure, are gathering signatures for a referendum to repeal it

By Jessie Balmert
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An effort to block the sweeping higher education law, Senate Bill 1, can now collect signatures to put the anti-diversity, equity and inclusion legislation up for a statewide vote.

A group of Youngstown State University faculty is leading the effort to block Senate Bill 1, an extensive revision of higher education policy in Ohio. But they are on a tight timeline: they have until the end of June to collect about 248,000 valid signatures to make the fall ballot.

On May 5, they cleared their first hurdle. Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost certified the title and summary language for the proposed referendum to repeal Senate Bill 1.

The next step is collecting signatures from voters in at least 44 of Ohio's 88 counties, in addition to the grand total, which is 6% of the last governor's race's results. They have 90 days from March 28, when Gov. Mike DeWine signed the bill, to collect those signatures.

Senate Bill 1, championed by Sen. Jerry Cirino, R-Kirtland, bans diversity, equity and inclusion programs at Ohio's public universities and colleges. It also prevents faculty from striking, makes it easier to fire tenured faculty and requires syllabi be posted online.

The bill is already having an impact. Ohio State University shuttered two diversity, equity and inclusion offices. Ohio University announced it would close its Multicultural Center, Pride Center and Women's Center, WOUB reported.

Opponents of the bill face a challenge, because successful referendums to block state laws are rare. The latest attempt was a well-funded effort to block House Bill 6, which included a bailout for two nuclear plants. It failed, but the FBI probe of that campaign led to [the conviction of Ohio House Speaker Larry Householder for his role in a statehouse corruption scandal.](#)

Before that, Ohio voters successfully [overturned an anti-collective bargaining bill in 2011](#), dealing a political blow to then-Gov. John Kasich.