

May 8, 2023

Thank you Chairman Kuempel. My name is Patrick Smith, speaking for myself as a private individual. I am a tenured professor at Texas State University and a member of the Texas Faculty Association. I thank the committee for this opportunity to speak in support of robust tenure protections and in opposition to SB 18.

My field of scholarly expertise is biliteracy and educational linguistics, which I have practiced as a faculty member in the University of Texas System in El Paso and the Rio Grande Valley, at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, and the U.S. accredited Universidad de las Américas, Puebla in Mexico.

At these universities I have served as chair and member of faculty committees charged with recruiting, interviewing, and recommending candidates for faculty positions in my field. I've been privileged to work with faculty colleagues and university administrators to identify the most highly qualified candidates to teach our students, perform university service, and conduct research that brings funding, knowledge, and prestige to the state of Texas. At each institution, the opportunity to earn tenure, following rigorous review of performance under the principal of shared governance, has been a fundamental component of the process of recruiting and hiring new faculty members.

In more than 25 years as a university professor (15 of them in Texas), I have seen many changes in higher education. None are as damaging to the quality of higher education as the threat of weakening tenure as proposed in SB 18.

Make no mistake: weakening tenure protections will harm Texas universities. Job openings for faculty positions will go unfilled or to

candidates with fewer qualifications. The most qualified candidates will not apply for jobs here. This will be the case for job openings at the assistant professor rank, meaning that Texas universities will lose out on professors with the most up-to-date training and cutting-edge knowledge. The ability to attract candidates at the associate and full professor ranks will suffer because established researchers will not apply for jobs where tenure and academic freedom are under attack.

I was recruited to work at Texas State from the University of Illinois as a tenured full professor in 2017. In 2023, under the proposed SB 18, I would not consider such an offer.

Tenured and untenured faculty alike will begin seeking positions at universities in states that maintain strong tenure protections and guarantee a faculty voice in shared governance. If SB 18 is enacted, out-of-state institutions will begin “poaching” the best and the brightest of Texas faculty.

This legislation will lead to a “brain drain” from Texas universities at the same time we are trying to create more research institutions and graduate more students from historically under-served populations. The Texas economy will suffer because employers in the knowledge economy seek a stable, well-educated workforce.

Passing SB 18 would turn Texas into an educational backwater. Let’s not shoot ourselves in the foot. I urge you to support higher education and the state economy by opposing SB 18.

Thank you.

