HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Submitted to the Committee on Higher Education

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COMMENTS FOR SB 18 by Creighton | et al.

Mary Beltran, Dr.
Self. Professor at the University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX

SB 18 would have an intensely negative impact on Texas universities. It will drive talented current faculty and new faculty members away from the state, while many students will choose to attend universities in other states as well. It will discourage university faculty from conducting research that could potentially be viewed as cutting edge or controversial, and will discourage free speech.

Karen LaCroix
Texas Eagle Forum
Tyler, TX

Please support this Bill. Schools should be able to remove individuals who are focused upon political indoctrination rather than upon the education of out young adults.

L Quentin Dixon
Self/concerned citizen
Spring, TX

Please vote NO on SB 18, as this bill would abolish tenure. Currently, tenured faculty in state institutions undergo annual reviews and create action plans if they fall short in any of the areas (research, teaching & service) evaluated. Abolishing tenure would discourange promising new scholars from considering employment in Texas, and would cause an exodus of tenure-worthy faculty who would be able to obtain tenure elsewhere. Why endanger our world-class research centers in health and other areas by eliminating tenure? This bill is bad for higher ed and bad for the future economy of Texas.

Jersey Robinson
Self, Student
Austin, TX

I am against the passage of SB 18. Tenure should remain in tact and left up to higher education institutions to determine the terms of. There is no need for it to eliminated as there has not been an issue raised that needs fixing. Also, there is no need for this matter to be legislated state wide. This proposed elimination of tenure is not conducive to a respectable education system in Texas. With the passage of this bill, Texas institutions would dramatically regress and fall behind institutions and education systems of comparable caliber.

Katie Thonen
self
San Antonio, TX

Tenure should be available to librarians. It helps maintain professional status with faculty and ensures librarians receive the same academic protections their faculty counterparts have. Tenure at public institutions should be allowed if the institution wants it as this can help make Texas a desirable state for librarians to live and work.

Holly Levin-Aspenson, Dr.
self, Assistant Professor of Psychology
Denton, TX

I am urging you to not pass this bill out of committee, as it is a direct threat to academic freedom and, therefore, the future of higher education in Texas.

This bill threatens efforts to prevent and treat mental health problems throughout Texas. One of my core responsibilities as a professor is to supervise the training of clinical psychology students. The ability to freely research, teach, and learn allows faculty in my department (myself included) to help our students provide affordable, accessible, evidence-based assessment and therapy services to local residents, as well as vitally important services to residents in more rural parts of Texas. These students go on to become practicing psychologists in our local community and throughout Texas and play a crucial role in addressing the urgent need for mental health care in our state. Any bill that limits academic freedom limits our ability to recruit new faculty to grow our mission.

Our current faculty, myself included, are committed to addressing the mental health needs of Texans. However, if the Texas state government does not have faith in our ability to do our jobs, many are likely to take their talents to other states. The work we do to educate the future mental health providers of Texas can be done only if we as faculty retain our fundamental right to academic freedom.

David Mazella
Department of English, Univ Houston
Houston, TX

Tenured employment is absolutely essential for maintaining the quality of teaching and research in this state. Academic freedom is a major incentive for recruiting international faculty, and ensures that valuable research is not suppressed by the prejudices or interests of a few. It is essential to the continued functioning of public higher education in this state, whose population continues to grow, and which cannot succeed politically or economically without a well-educated populace.

Jo Foley
self/none
Henderson, TX

I am watching the hearing and what I hear is all these people working in institutions of higher learning saying that getting rid of tenure would hurt the system. Maybe for them. What has been hurting our students, according to many students accounts, is woke professors , many with tenure, that make them feel that they must adhere to the professor's liberal agenda in order to get a good grade. The student's are afraid to speak out. Tenure allows a bad professor the ability to treat students according to the professor's own agenda with no fear of reprisal. Please do not water down this bill.

David Thompson, Dr.
Self
Buchanan Dam, TX

My name is David Thompson, and I am currently nearing 30 years as a professor of educational leadership at two Texas public institutions of higher education. I write as a citizen on this important matter of public concern to oppose SB 18. In its simplest form, tenure is the privilege of continuing to work as a faculty member without periodic reappointment. It is not a license to goof off, cease being evaluated, or to otherwise do whatever one wants (or doesn't want) to do. It is the privilege to pursue lines of inquiry without without being subjected to the political whims of the moment. It is designed to protect unpopular viewpoints, both "liberal" and "conservative". We are evaluated annually and subject to post-tenure review every five years. The elimination of tenure will have two foreseeable consequences: (1) the inability to recruit and retain top-quality faculty, and (2) an easier means to silence the voices this bill seeks to protect. It is bad policy and deserves to be left pending in this committee.

Katherine Vukadin, Ms.
self/law professor at a private college
Houston, Texas, TX

I'm a UT and UH alum and a proud mom of a UH Downtown freshman. Our universities are a crown jewel of Texas. The best and the brightest will not want to come here if they can't ever get tenure! Please don't gut our universities.

Deana Johnston
self
Dallas, TX

Tenure should not be used as a tool to allow and protect professors who use their status to push their political agenda.

Robin Moore
Self; professor, UT Austin
Austin, TX

All Research-1 universities in the United States offer tenure to faculty. Without it, the University of Texas will not be able to recruit the best talent. Eliminating tenure at our university will severely damage its reputation as well. Our ratings will drop, existing faculty tenure will leave. This is a very bad idea if we want the University of Texas to retain its elite status as a center of higher learning, research, and publishing. Please do not vote to support this change.

Lisa Songy
self/ lawyer
Dallas, TX

Do not pass this Bill. It will result in our best and brightest both educators and students leaving the state. Do not be the cause of such a loss of intellect for our state. We need well educated individuals not under educated.

Kathryn Kizer
Year
Austin, TX

I am opposed to this bill.

Cristina Soriano
Self / Associate professor
Austin, TX

Tenure is a standard characteristic of university level teaching and research jobs that protects professional education and research, academic freedom and critical thinking. Tenure confers immunity from retaliation for politically motivated reasons, therefore it is essential for universities commitment to academic freedom, rigor, and advancement. Banning tenure will have a huge negative impact on intellectual production and rigor, it will harm our students access to critical thinking and creativity (no one will be willing to explore or take risks), it will definitely harm our universities financially since it would be impossible to get grants without proper intellectual protection. Texas public universities have very clear rules in place for the post-tenure period, professors are still responsible and accountable for what they teach, what they do research on and how they behave in and outside the classroom. The idea that we are immune to rules and regulations is totally wrong, we don't need this bill as it would create much more problems than solutions and would definitely harm the quality of education we offer at public universities in Texas. Please don't pass this bill.

Tracie Matysik
Independent citizen, educator
Austin, TX

I urge the House to REJECT SB 18. Tenure exists at universities around the world. For UT and other institutions of higher education in the state of Texas to remain strong and competitive, tenure is a necessity. Tenure enables faculty to perform research with uncertain outcomes, and only such research is truly capable of changing the intellectual landscape. Scientists must be able to challenge the status quo; they must be able to perform experiments that are truly risky if they want truly rewarding -- BIG -- results. Likewise Historians must be able to track down hitherto untapped sources if they want to expose truly new information about the past. But doing this kind of groundbreaking research is risky. You don't know how long it will take to get results, or what the results will be. Without tenure, we would not be able to undertake truly groundbreaking research or experimentation.

Rankings for the univerities would drop precipitously if tenure were abolished. New faculty would not want to come or stay. As a result, we would not have the kind of senior faculty with national and international reputations that affect university rankings. And without high university rankings, more Texas students would be tempted to go out of state for college. STudents graduating from Texas universities can currently boast nationally and internationally that their degrees are meaningful, prestigious. If the universities rankings drop because we cannot retain faculty who perform groundbreaking research, Texas students will suffer. Their degrees will not be the tickets to future success that they currently are; they will go elsewhere for degrees. The state will lose much intellectual talent as a result, as those students will then very likely stay in other parts of the country after college.

Abolition of tenure would have tremendous -- and very adverse -- trickle-down effects. I urge the House to vote against SB 18.

Akhil Jalan
Self
Austin, TX

I am strongly opposed to SB 18 because it would totally crush the academic system of the state of Texas. As a PhD candidate at UT I am planning for a career in scientific research. While I would love to stay in Texas, SB 18 would eliminate my future job security and I would be forced to pursue my career elsewhere. I am confident that my colleagues would do the same, leading to a mass exodus of scientific talent from Texas.

Briana Owirodu
Self
Celina, TX

!!!

Janey Liu
Self
Dallas, TX

I strongly opposed the bill

Gowa Borzigin
North Texas parent
Allen, TX

As a parent of a college student, I strongly oppose SB18. Without a proper tenure system, Texas will lose the ability to attract and recruit educators and professors in our high learning institutions, and the result is that our students will suffer, our educational quality will suffer. Please hear us out.

Reed Bilz, Ms
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am writing to urge you to OPPOSE SB 18. Even though this bill has been amended to remove the tenure deletion, if it is voted out of committee, the bill may change for the worse in the committee reconciliation process.

Please vote NO on SB 18 to prevent this bill from moving forward.

Lily Yabg
Self
Richardson, TX

I oppose the sb18. We will lose more good professors.

Ling Ge
Slef
Plano, TX

I am strongly against the bill. We will see the decline of Texas public universities in a couple of years if the bill passed.

James Sidbury
Self: Professor of History at Rice University
Houston, TX

I taught at the University of Texas at Austin for 20 years (1991-2011) and loved the institution. I moved to Rice for personal reasons, but would never have chosen to leave had the decision been strictly professional, because the History Department offered a dynamic intellectual and scholarly home that fostered excellent research and outstanding teaching. Had the law currently being debated been in place, I would have been eager to escape UT in search of a university able to offer the guarantee of academic freedom. This law will deeply injure all public universities in Texas, and, by doing so, it will hurt the children of Texas and the Texas businesses that rely on our universities to produced a skilled and educated workforce. The prospect of its passage makes me glad, for the first time, that I am no longer a faculty member at UT.

Debbie Brand, Ms.
Self
Granbury, TX

We need to encourage educators to stay. Keep things as is. Vote no!

Hugh Li, Dr.
self
Austin, TX

Strongly against SB18 as amended. It is not necessary as the current bill is identical to the rules at Texas A&M regarding tenure review, in force since 1995. This is now just propaganda and a waste of tax payer money.

Hugh Li, Dr.
Self
Austin, TX

Strongly against SB 17. DEi policies have helped minority students to gain admission to and get necessary support from Texas public universities, many of them first college students in their families and communities. The policies are not perfect and can be improved, but abolishing them altogether is draconian, unwise and unnecessary.

Linda Hanratty
self
Fort Worth, TX

This is a bad bill. Tenure in higher education is not perfect, but it protects staff from political pressure. This bill would allow or even call for such pressure. I
Sec. 3c's provision only includes a "faculty member's regular annual salary" in their "property interest" means that if a faculty member is found to be performing in an unsatisfactory way, they cannot expect due process to protect any other aspect of their job.

The definition of "professional incompetence" in sec. 3c2Ai is unclear, and it is also unclear who will determine such incompetence.

Sec. 3c2Avii is especially worrisome as it allows for dismissal of a tenured faculty who has "engaged in unprofessional conduct that adversely affects the institution…" This is likely a sanitized way to target "activist" faculty who engage in protected speech outside of the university who are deemed to do reputational harm to the university. This also could be used against faculty who challenge their institution's policies or procedures.

We need to maintain faculty freedom in order to preserve the prestige of our public universities.

Fudong Liu
Self
Pestland, TX

Tenure is very important for scientists as it allows them to enjoy science and aids in improving scientists' innovation and productivity .

Eleftherios Gkioulekas
self, Professor of Mathematics
Edinburg, TX

I am writing to you today, as a private citizen and not on behalf of my institution, to ask you to vote NO on SB 18, which eliminates the future awarding of faculty tenure by public institutions of higher learning in Texas, and to vote NO on any other proposed bills in the future that aim to weaken but not eliminate faculty tenure. In Texas, tenured faculty undergo post tenure review to ensure they are active and productive and in my institution we have a variable workload policy so that faculty that are not pulling their weight in research can help more in the other areas and vice versa.

Although faculty are seen with disdain by some people on the Right, it should be highlighted that it was brave Mathematics faculty that first spoke out against the use of diversity statements in faculty hiring, thanks to tenure protections. See: https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-universitys-new-loyalty-oath-11576799749

Faculty tenure is essential in elevating the research profile of Texas public universities and protecting viewpoint diversity, and the weakening or elimination of faculty tenure will only transfer academic power to University administrators that tend to be more politically radicalized than the faculty as a whole. A significant proportion of the top research faculty talent will respect and feel welcomed by academic institutions that strongly support tenure and simultaneously do not require the submission of diversity statements as part of the job application process and/or faculty evaluation. There is significant demand for faculty positions that combine these two characteristics by the best scientific talent around the world.

Tenure is valued the most by top research faculty because it is absolutely crucial for academic freedom in research. I understand this personally because I co-authored a research paper on the early outpatient treatment of COVID-19 with Dr. Peter McCullough and the late Dr. Vladimir Zelenko, showing that we had clear and convincing evidence by the end of April 2020 that the Zelenko protocol was effective in preventing COVID-19 hospitalizations, and clear and convincing evidence by the middle of June 2020 that the Zelenko protocol was effective in preventing deaths. By December 2020 these results were corroborated by multiple treatment centers.

My collaborator, Dr. Peter McCullough has endured substantial cancellation and academic persecution for his groundbreaking research efforts on COVID-19. When I gave a podcast interview about our collaboration, I was asked whether I faced similar backlash, and in response I explained that faculty tenure goes a long way towards protecting faculty like myself with contrarian views. Unfortunately, the majority of faculty in the areas of health sciences work without tenure. Lack of tenure prevented many of them from speaking candidly about the available options for treating COVID-19, which in turn has endangered the health of all Texas residents.

Susan Burek
Member of Texas State Employees Union
Austin, TX

PLEASE VOTE NO ON SB 18, which is related to tenure and employment status at public institutions of higher education in Texas.

This bill would ban academic tenure at all public colleges and universities and is a direct attack on academic freedom in public higher education institutions in Texas.

Thank you very much.

Lora Wildenthal, Prof.
self, occupation professor
Houston, TX

If low performing tenure professors are getting a pass, tenure is not the problem; poor management is. There are tools to solve that problem where it exists.

If the state of Texas abolishes tenure, it will immediately put all its campuses at a severe disadvantage regarding hiring, thereby damaging the immense investments already made. If all Fortune 500 companies offer health insurance as a benefit, and one decides that that is wrong and refuses to, then job applicants will avoid that company. It's that simple.

I have been a professor since 1994 and tenured since 2003. I have worked seven-day weeks for most semesters of that period, as well as working through the summers. I have chaired a department, directed a center (twice), and served as associate dean. I have worked to the point of damaging my health for my university. Tenure does not encourage people not to work. It creates a setting in which we professors can truly invest in our own institutions.

Charles Sauer
self
AUSTIN, TX

I am a graduate and former assistant professor of computer science at UT-Austin. Though I have chosen to work primarily with commercial companies throughout my career, I treasure my memories and contact with UT faculty. I cannot imagine that I would have joined the faculty if tenure was not a possibility. I cannot imagine that the great professors I've known at UT-Austin would have been there without tenure. Eliminating tenure at UT Austin and Texas A&M is a terrible idea. Please continue tenure.

Bonnie Seelig
Self Retired
Spicewood, TX

Support SB 18
Public Institutions of Higher Education don't need to be bound to Tenure. The state should not be "giving permanent positions" to any employee. We are not trying to develop fiefdoms.
Why would promises of permanent jobs be given to any employee? You don't see this in the private sector. This is like saying your work effort doesn't matter. Hard work is the foundation of the American system. Do we feel that these people are not up to the task of competing in the American work force? Do we try to attract slackers in the government sector?

What happens is that if you have someone with little ambition, they become "dead weight" in the system. Let the government jobs be the shining example of responsible employees.

Cory Wimberly
Self
Austin, TX

SB18 should NOT pass. The development of ideas and research pursuing the truth should be free from coercion, fear, or external influence. Eliminating tenure opens up research in everything from materials engineering (which can be politically and economically charged based on the economics and resources required for new materials), to law, to psychology to the distortions that come from outside pressures that really have no concern for the truth. I am talking about political pressures from economic interests, political fads, administrators' bias, etc. Faculty do have their material highly scrutinized and vetted--by blind (often double blind) peer review in their publication outlets. The difference is that the peer reviewers take the time to develop expertise in their field of review and are are more likely to evaluate based on research and knowledge than mere political agenda.

Moreover, eliminating texture would cause academic flight, which would drastically reduce the attractiveness of Texas to employers. Many of whom come here to hire our college graduates knowing they are getting top flight people. If UT, A&M, Tech, etc lose their status, so does Texas in the eyes of employers.

Anat Belasen
UT Austin
Austin, TX

This bill is inherently at odds with the institution of higher education, the principles of academic freedom and more broadly freedom of speech, and directly works against the best interests of Texans and Texas institutions of higher education. As an academic scientist with 3 years of undergraduate training, 9 years of graduate-level training and 4 years of postgraduate experience in academic institutions.To remove tenure for new faculty hires would undo decades of progress in ensuring quality educational experiences and equity for all people, particularly those people for whom social and economic barriers have existed since the inception of higher education in the US. As a private citizen, I fervently oppose this bill. If this bill passes, I and my contemporaries who are looking for permanent jobs in higher education will move to other states where such regulations do not exist. This would represent a critical loss of economic gain, innovation, and relevancy for Texas.

Gladys Morris
Self
League City, TX

I'm in opposition to the passage of this bill as it will be detrimental to public institutions in Texas.

CX Kang, Dr.
Self, faculty member at a Texas public university
Dickinson, TX

“Everything is Bigger in Texas”, so people say. But SB 18 makes Texas smaller, Not bigger. So, bury SB 18 in the House committee, please.

Howdy! My name is C.X. Kang, a U.S. citizen and a registered voter in the county of Galveston, TX. I’m hereby testifying in opposition to SB 18 as a private citizen, though I’m also a tenured faculty at one of the satellite campuses of a major public university in Texas. I respectfully request that the honorable members of the House Higher Ed Committee quash the bill within the committee.

There is a long litany of ill, even potentially disastrous, effects attendant with the abolition of tenure – or simply its gutting by taking away academic freedom and other protections by which tenure has customarily been characterized. You will have heard or read testimonies on the manifold detrimental impact of SB 18 from many other concerned citizens and like-minded colleagues. I, for one, believe that the bill is rather small-minded; it is unworthy of the great state of Texas – and thus unworthy of its august legislative body.

Permit me to relate a quick anecdote. I was a graduate student in math at U.T. Austin in the nineteen-nineties, before the shores of Town Lake became dotted with all the impressive high rises, and Austin was still a relatively sleepy town, especially in the summer. Besides the capitol dome, the Robert Lee Moore (RLM) building of U.T. Austin was one of the more imposing buildings in the city. During lunch break one day just outside of RLM, a young guy my age at the time (who wasn’t a U.T. student, as it turned out) strolled up to me asking: “hey, dude, what’s this building for?” I told him that the building is for math and physics (though also for astronomy) and home to quite a few great scientists of the day. I still remember his incredulous reaction: “WHAT?? This giant thing just for math???”

It was only then that I started to appreciate how the impressive edifices of U.T. Austin and Texas A&M University speak to the ambition of the age: the Texas lawmakers facilitating their build at the time had a vision and a sense of grandeur for Texas – not only as a great state in the union, but also as a great state even if Texas were an independent polity amongst the firmament of nations. Indeed, from the gulf shores lapped by the warm subtropical sea in the southeast to the high desert (Llano Estacado) in the west, with its rich fishing grounds, the black gold in the Permian Basin, and the vast and fertile farmland in between, Texas is an envy of nations. However, all the natural bounties notwithstanding –not to mention any edifice made of brick and mortar, Texas cannot attract the finest minds to its shores without a welcoming and enlightened policy for its public higher education system. Tenure, with all its attendant protections, is essential to the continued vitality of higher education in Texas.

(... Not enough characters are being allowed.)

Sincerely, CX Kang (speaking as a private citizen)

Eunjeong Yi, Dr.
self, professor at a Texas public university
Dickinson, TX

Dear Members of Higher Education Committee:

Greetings!

I, Eunjeong Yi, am a registered voter in the state of Texas, and I am testifying against SB 18 in my capacity as a private citizen.

I am also a tenured faculty at a public university in Texas, and I have taught mathematics to Texans for over twenty years. I believe academic freedom and tenure are essential in attracting the best teachers and scholars to colleges and universities in Texas, and our students deserve the opportunity to learn from and interact with the best educators/scholars in the nation. I oppose SB 18, because erosion of tenure and restriction of academic freedom can do more harm than good to faculty and students alike.

I have gone through the post-tenure review (PTR) recently in addition to annual evaluations. Though the spirit of PTR may have started to encourage faculty to continue with their productivity, I found the preparation for the PTR being onerous and taking away faculty's time to focus on teaching and research.

Academic freedom in academia has been eroding in Texas. I recall some administrators saying that simply using the terms "real-world" or "real-life" is micro aggression and that simply using the term "foreign national" is inappropriate. These are attacks on freedom of speech at a public institution and this attitude prevents faculty from having reasonable and constructive conversation with students due to fear of threat and retaliation by administrators. I lost some math colleagues who had no tenure and who were conscientious teachers all due to administrators.

Imagine a department with dwindling talents because it stopped hiring tenure-track faculty. Such a department would not value faculty research, and the chair/head would evaluate a faculty solely based on his assignment of grades to students and his committee services (created for the purpose of providing a service component for annual evaluation and promotion). Such a department would hire more ad-hoc or part-time faculty as needed, and this could lead to potential dire consequences. What if a student graduates with excellent grades but not knowing the course materials, and then works on building an airplane after graduation? What if a student is taught wrong stuff in a class and then is totally lost in a subsequent STEM course? I believe academic freedom and tenure protect faculty to continue with their teaching and research even when they are not favored by administrators.

Instead of SB 18, I like to propose a "term-limit" for administrators both at the department-level and at the college-level. In a top-down school system, chair/head could drive the department to an irreparable situation just to keep his/her administrative position, and term-limit may restrain chair/head from doing things randomly.

Thank you for taking time to read this testimony, and I am hopeful that SB 18 is defeated.

Sincerely,
Eunjeong Yi, writing as a private citizen of Texas

John Mckiernan
self
Austin, TX

I write in support of academic freedom, tenure and the grand Texas tradition of helping universities do their best job researching, teaching and serving their communities.

Eliminating tenure would downgrade Texas public universities in Carnegie Classifications across the board.

The most promising academic candidates will most likely not apply for jobs with no academic freedom, giving universities in California, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan and Colorado more leverage on the best faculty available.

It would potentially endanger the recent granting of R1 status to UTD, UTSA, TT, UTEP, UTRGV and UH by because universities might not be able to meet all the institutional standards for federal research money.

Moreover, people in Texas have long had the public money to sustainably build public nationally ranked R1 institutions, something particularly important to the relatively young population here in Texas.

Eliminating tenure state-wide raises the possibility of losing status, ranking, federal funds, student enrollment and productive internationally known faculty in key cities and counties. Universities are a growth engine here in Texas. Eliminating tenure seems financially irresponsible and a direct blow to the knowledge economy here in Texas.

Keep the rising trajectory of Texas universities going. Strengthen the established quality of research and teaching

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Kelly Zamudio
self
AUSTIN, TX

This bill will be highly prejudicial to the state because it will gut the University system. Not allowing tenure will be a serious barrier to attracting new faculty to our state schools. This will gut the research and development power of the UT system, with profound economic consequences for the state economy. This bill is a disservice to higher education and to the state.

Liana Lopez
Nuestra Palabra
Houston, TX

DEI programs are that programs promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in our schools and communities, and they are essential for creating a more just and equal society, on the one hand, a global competitiveness, on the other. Agreement to pass this bill is putting much of our civil rights progress at risk.

Tatem Oldham
self, counselor
Austin, TX

If this bill passes Texas will face a brain drain of our most successful high school students leaving the state to attend other universities. Getting rid of tenure will make it so much more difficult for Texas colleges to recruit and retain talented researchers and faculty. Remember the UT faculty member who helped create the COVID vaccine, helping the whole world? Faculty with this type potential will not be interested in teaching at a college where tenure doesn't exist. Instead, they'll go elsewhere and our Texas college reputations will plummet. When our rankings go down in US News, parents and high schoolers will be less likely to come to Texas or stay in Texas. This hurts our economy. Please think about the long term effects of this bill and leave tenure decisions up to each university.

Joanne Richards
self
Austin, TX

I was unaware that there was a substantial committee substitute for SB 18. Now that I aware of its wording, I still encourage the committee to vote against the SB 18 substitute because, if it passes and is sent back to the Senate, a tenure ban may reemerge. Tenure must remain for the many reasons that I outlined in the written testimony that I left with the committee clerk for distribution this morning. I appreciate the opportunity to clarify my testimony.

Chris Donofrio
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I strongly oppose SB 18, engrossed and any other version.
I demand you let this bill die in committee.

According to the Fiscal Analysis for the Engrossed bill:
"It is assumed that any costs associated with the bill could be absorbed using existing resources."
"No significant fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated."

This analysis couldn't have looked at much.
I was able to quickly research fiscal issues concerning ending tenure and found 12 financially catastrophic impacts.
Hundreds of millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs.

1) Lead some businesses, especially in high tech, to leave the state or not consider Texas. This will result in lack of tax revenue and significant unemployment.
2) Discourage joint private business-university collaborations since some highly qualified professors/candidates will find employment out of Texas.
3) Result in withdrawals of private and foundation donations in protest.

4) Destroy our great medical training universities. They contribute $25 billion and over 365 thousand jobs to the Texas economy.
5) Drive doctors out of the state, to other medical training universities.
6) Decrease the quality of health care at the world's best medical centers due to the loss of doctors, professors, and medical students.

7) Drive qualified professors from Texas universities, tenured and non-tenured.
8) Strongly discourage faculty candidates from considering coming to Texas.
9) Losing faculty to companies able to pay 3x more.
10) Strongly discourage outside funding for research due to uncertainty caused by (7), (8), and (9).

11) Destroy the reputations of our great universities. This will lead to some accrediting organizations removing accreditations.
12) Cause students and potential students to seek their education elsewhere.

It has also been proven that universities offering tenure leads to greater rates of students graduating.

During the Senate public hearing, only 2 gave testimony in support of SB 18. 94 opposed it.
The 2 supporters were the Heritage Foundation and the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Both are active donors to radical conservatives and causes. Both are working hard to dismantle academic freedom. Both encourage greater state overreach.

I choose to stand with those opposing SB 18. Those defending academic freedom.
Professors
Students
TX Faculty Assoc.
TX Community College Teachers Assoc.
TX American Federation of Teachers
TX Students for DEI

Freedom Network
North TX Commision
Asian American Leadership Council
Black Brown Dialogues on Policy
NAACP
ACLU TX
TX AFL-CIO

They, like me, know that SB 18 will hurt Texas and Texans.

Respectfully,
Chris J. Donofrio

Astrid Kattwinkel
self
DECORDOVA, TX

I'm against this suggested bill which would prohibit public higher education institutions in the state from offering tenure or “any type of permanent employment status” starting September 1st! The president of my alma mater (& Abbott's), UT President Jay Hartzell, said in a statement last year that removing tenure would hamper Texas’ ability to recruit and retain great faculty members; specifically, "It would also hurt Texas students, who would not be able to stay in state knowing that they will be learning from the very best in the country...It would also increase the risk of universities across the state making bad decisions for the wrong reasons.”

Cynthia Dwyer
The Tarrant Together Project
Fort Worth, TX

I am writing today to say that I oppose this bill.

Abigail Russell
Self student
Houston, TX

I feel SB 18 like SB 17 will be severely detrimental to the quality of education people can gain from texas universities. The reputation of Texas' universities will be harmed and the degree I have worked hard towards attaining will be worth less if this passes.

Teresa Cuevas
self
Austin, TX

This white supremacy bill is divisive and will send Texas and its schools back a century and negatively impact the Texas economy by destroying jobs and driving people out of state. Creighton keeps sponsoring racist bills and clearly doesn’t care about Texans and supporting workers and educators.

Cary Cordova, Dr.
Self / professor
Austin, TX

My name is Cary Cordova, and I’m speaking for myself as a private individual, to testify against SB 18. As a professor of American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin, I have undergone tenure review, and thus, I have developed an appreciation for the importance of a system that is rare in other professions. In fact, I hold dear a system that was established to enable professors to pursue independent research and to express ideas without fearing retaliation from their institutions. Tenure is unique to academe, and I can understand some of the motivation to bring higher education in line with other professions, but please understand that this bill has emerged to undermine the stability of professors at public colleges and universities in Texas and to discourage expressions of dissent. Please do not support this bill, which can be used to strike out at researchers engaged in challenging and / or controversial research. This bill is likely to diminish the competitiveness of Texas colleges and universities in a variety of ways. I already see some of my colleagues leaving my university for positions in other states.

Aaron Boehmer
Self
Austin, TX

As a student and resident in Austin, TX, I fully and
unequivocally oppose SB 18, which aims to eliminate tenure for newly hired professors. Tenure is essential in protecting the freedom, rights, and security of all faculty, staff, and students within higher education. Additionally, as diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and programs continue to be under attack, tenure protects professors and instructors' academic freedom and ability to teach the truth, including the history and ongoing reality of systemic racism in Texas and the U.S. Universities and colleges could use the elimination of tenure as another way to target diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and teachings, firing or punishing professors and faculty for teaching about topics such as racial injustice and other topics that are essential to an intersectional, nuanced, full, and complete education.

In this way, SB 18 is extremely harmful to students, professors, and the future of higher education, promoting inequity, job insecurity, inequality, and racism, all of which we must staunchly and vehemently oppose — and that includes the House Higher Education Committee, the Texas House, and the Texas Government at large.

Please do NOT pass SB 18.

CHUCK HOWARD
SELF
CUERO, TX

TENURE IN ALL FORMS SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION. IT IS A PROTECTED CLASS AND THERE SHOULD BE NO PROTECTED INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE INSTRUCTOR CLASSES IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS. PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS SHOULD CONSIDER ENDING EMPLOYMENT TENURE. EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS FOR SHORT DURATIONS OF 3 YEARS OR LESS ARE FINE BUT NOTHING THAT LEADS TO LIFETIME EMPLOYMENT.

David Barrientos
Self
Irving, TX

Research shows that all students benefit from a diverse teaching. SB 17 compromises students' academic and social experiences on college campuses and makes college faculty less diverse and inclusive of different backgrounds and ideas.
Stop SB 17 and keep our Texas institutions diverse, inclusive and supportive for all students.

Lydia Tressel
self
AUSTIN, TX

Be removing tenure from public institutions of higher education in the state of Texas, we won't have any academics who will want to teach in Texas. If Texas is the great state that it is, then we need the best education. In order to have the best education, we need educators at the top of their field. We can not have the best educators if they are not willing to work in Texas.

Dana Newlove
Self. Administrative Assistant
Austin, TX

I am writing to share my opposition to S.B. 18 proposed in the Texas state legislature. As a white, middle-aged, middle-class female, I am appalled at the bill's poorly disguised intention to prevent students from learning about the "uncomfortable" aspects of American history. This bill is just one of many tactics in this broad attack on "the left," and it is shameful. Tenure is a protection for freedom of thought. How is it that the "Higher Education Committee" cannot see its way to protecting professors who are brave enough to teach difficult topics and foster difficult conversations about our history? Because I have no hope that you will give up this crusade against the left, I would ask you to consider instead the economic good of the state. Since you're on this committee, I trust you know how important the UT system is to the economic well-being of Texas. These efforts to curtail academic freedom are already having a negative impact on the university's hiring, recruiting, and funding efforts. The more of this legislation you pass, the worse it gets. You have a highly respected Research 1 institution in UT Austin, yet the legislature is slowly destroying its reputation. How is it that the "Higher Education Committee" can't protect it?

Sherry Johnson
self
Granbury, TX

I am AGAINST SB18 because it eliminates tenure at General Academic Institutions.

Erin Murrah-Mandril, Dr.
self
Arlington, TX

I work at UT, Arlington. We were recently grated the Carnegie R1 designation, which means we are a high-research institution. If SB18 passes, UT Arlington will likely lose that designation. The designation depends on metrics like how many hours undergraduates interact with Tenured and Tenure Track faculty, how many books and patents faculty produce and other things that depend on a university having Tenured and Tenure Track faculty. The university is an important economic engine for all of North Texas. We have a tremendous impact on the rise in economic status of our graduates. Texas universities will not be able to attract and retain the teachers and students that make Texas such a strong and secure state to live in without the tenure designation.

Just today, I had a meeting with a recently hired individual who graduated from Penn State and signed a contract for a Tenure Track job in Texas. His first question was about this bill. I tried to belay his concerns, but it is clear, he and other talented individuals will look elsewhere for employment if SB 18 is passed. Please do not bring this bill or any other like it to a vote.

Gayle Roberts
Self
DALLAS, TX

Please vote AGAINST this bill. Eliminating tenure for public universities in Texas will make our institutions less competitive as professors bypass Texas to go to other states (like California) that continue to provide tenure. It would also discourage research organizations from coming to Texas. In the end, this is a very bad bill for our state.

Thank you,

Gayle Roberts

Xavier Medina Vidal
Self
Arlington, TX

The passage of SB 18 would effectively terminate the UT System's status as a premier university system by making our universities places where no faculty would willingly want to work. Such an absurd law abandoning tenure in Texas' public universities would, in effect, make our universities the least desirable public universities in the world. This is a disservice to our citizens, students, and staff in the UT system.

Marcus Palmer, Dr.
self
San Antionio, TX

*Please maintain my anonymity. Although I would expect that you maintain my anonymity, this first request reflects the intense anxiety and stress that I feel regarding this issue.

I am a tenure-track faculty member at a public Texas university and am writing to plead with you to fight to pass SB 18. Thank you in advance for reading the following sentiments I desire to share with you in this message.
--Since arriving at my institution, I have had to self-censure when it comes to any discussion of politics and a wide-range of controversial topics related to women's health, 1st and 2nd amendments, religion, and of course Critical Race Theory.
--My program is housed in a department that pushes participation in organizations such as AAUP, events related to book banning, and the signing of petitions oriented to support ideologies that I do not share.
--Even if I am awarded tenure, I anticipate that my situation will not necessarily change. In other words, tenure will not provide me with "free speech" within my own department because I will continue to be dependent on my colleagues for peer observations, administrative and programmatic support.

Please persist in passing SB 18 and send it to our governor's desk to become law!

//Concerned Texan native and taxpayer

Danai Munyaradzi
The University of Texas at Austin
Prosper, TX

As a Black female at a historically White institution, I am constantly having to prove myself and everyday I'm reminded of how racist the system continues to be. DEI has been a big part of my experience in higher education, and stripping that aspect away from many minority students and faculty would only take us back rather than forward. DEI allows me to find community and it allows me to have my voice be heard. Please take this into consideration, as many students count on DEI to feel like they belong.

Jerry Chappelle
Self
Granbury, TX

Eliminating tenure would reduce the universities' ability to recruit and retain top faculty who could get tenure in other states. If Gov. Abbott wants to improve the status of Texas universities, this bill would do the opposite. Whether a professor is left-leaning or right-leaning, doesn't matter, only the course they are teaching matters.

Christopher Mandril, Mr.
Self
Arlington, TX

The proposed elimination of tenure for Universities in Texas will have severe adverse effects on the quality of higher-education. Texas universities will lose their ability to attract the best and brightest minds in respective fields as they will opt for tenured positions in other states leaving our Universities to draw from less than optimal pools and major foundations will direct their funding, or money elsewhere. Removal of tenure is a direct attack on free speech, a Constitutionally protected right that we Texans hold most dear. A University without tenure is a University that discourages intellectual risks. Withdrawing from structures necessary for pursuing knowledge an institution without tenure is a factory for indoctrination. As Americans it is our duty to aspire to intelligence, we should not belittle it, it shouldn't make us feel inferior. We must be informed. By proposing to eliminate tenure we are catering to irrational fear brought on by a distinct minority. We will hold our representative government accountable for decisions they make regarding this matter.

Marlene Lobberecht
self/retired teacher
Houston, TX

I believe in a Texas where all Texans have the opportunity to pursue an inclusive, honest, and quality higher education. Today, I'm you to vote NO to Anti-DEI and Censorship legislation (SB 17 and SB 18) that harms students, faculty, and Texas' academic and our Texas economic goals.

May Nguyen
self, physician educator
Houston, TX

Today, I'm asking you all to vote NO to Anti-DEI and Censorship legislation that harms students, faculty, and Texas' academic and economic goals. In addition, these bills are harmful to people's social, emotional, and physical well-being. I believe in a Texas where all Texans have the opportunity to pursue an inclusive, honest, and quality higher education.

I work at a medical school with a social mission to develop a physician workforce with backgrounds representative of the state we live in. Our goal is to prepare future physicians to address health disparities that disproportionately affect historically marginalized populations. Without the ability to attract high quality faculty, we cannot help all Texans be healthy.

I am asking you all to say NO to SB 16, 17 & 18. By saying "NO!" to these bills, you are creating a vision of Texas where students and teachers feel safe and welcomed, where curiosity and critical thinking are cultivated, and where every student can thrive. Thank you for your time!

DANIELLE HOPKINS
Self
Houston, TX

Tenure is what allows professors to truly make academic explorations. It is an essential job security that professors need in order to make cutting edge research. It is comparable to taking away workers unions and leaving them unprotected and unable to have the job security they need. Taking away tenure would be a grave mistake.

Aria Rideaux
Self - UT Austin College Student
Pearland, TX

Hi, I am currently a student at The University of Texas at Austin, and I ask that you do not pass the bill to allow tenure to be reviewed at essentially any point. I attend a Tier 1 Research Institution, an extremely accredited University and I feel as though this bill would make my degree less accredited. Since this bill has been proposed, I have had 4 professor leave my University because they fear that they can not teach their classes comfortably anymore. Keep in mind, I am a first year business student, and I have only been here two semesters. I chose to attend The Red McCombs School of Business because it is one of the top 5 business schools in the country, but allowing this bill to pass could lead to our ranking falling with professors leaving. If our ranking as a college and University as a whole goes down, then that means less students will choose to come to Texas colleges, and our education (which I know we value so much) will not be taken as seriously. Please take this and the idea of all the work these professors have dedicated their lives too, when you choose NOT to pass SB 18 out of committee because the effects will be irreversible. Education will never be the same.

Eunjeong Lee
self
Houston, TX

Tenure is crucial in not only recruiting but also retaining faculty in higher education in Texas. Many academics go through years of doctoral training in the prospect of getting a secure job, which is protected through the tenure. Without the tenure, Texas will lose a pool of competent and critical scholars and educators who will educate the next generation of leaders in our country. I know Gov. Abbott has been keen on making Texas higher education more competitive on the national ranking, and this is not going to happen without having a measure to support and protect the faculty's work such as the tenure. Tenure is an important measure to protect every faculty regardless of their political leaning.

Patricia McNeely
self
Lipan, TX

Tenure should not be denied to professors who deserve it. This is not how professors should be excluded from teaching.

Jeremy Gevara, Dr.
Self
Houston, TX

As a lifelong Texan who has had the opportunity to travel the US for my work, I am in opposition to this bill due to the seemingly Draconian cuts it could do or could have done. The narrative before the bill appeared to target a particular group of people. The wording of the bill, however, will potentially do harm to all university faculty regardless of lawmakers' perceptions of them. Texas has been a great state I was looking forward to come back to because divergent thoughts have been allowed to exist in the same space. If the Texan culture is to let people act free of micromanaged oversight, why would we be ok with a bill that micromanages the RGV, South Plains, Far West Texas universities from Austin? How would this bill make the state government different from DC micromanaging the same universities?

Cynthia Miller
Self
Lubbock, TX

I strongly urge you to oppose this bill. There has been no evidence that I've seen from the author for even pushing this bill. How can bills be proposed that will do so much damage to higher education without any research to back it up? Stop. Impotent with Florida!!!!!

Margaret Solice
Self
Austin, TX

Hello,

My name is Margaret Solice and I am submitting this testimony online today as a private citizen. I grew up in Nacogdoches and Lufkin. I attended Tanglewood Elementary, one year at Slack, first and second at Dunbar, and third through fifth at Brandon. My mother was the debate coach at Lufkin High School for many years and travelled around the state getting kids the opportunities they need. My father attended SFA, as did my grandmother. My brother, Will attended SFA as well, though he was not able to complete his degree because he did not have access to the high quality healthcare facilities that he needed.

I attended Trinity University. After college, I was recruited to coach debate at Harvard. I am the youngest recipient of the James J. Unger coaching award in the history of the National Debate Tournament. I have designed the curriculum for summer debate programs not just around the country, but around the world. I have taught students at summer camps, including Harvard, Dartmouth, Berkeley, as well as in the countries of China, Canada, and Taiwan. I returned to Texas to complete my MA at the University of Texas. Next year I will complete my PhD at Northwestern.

I want to come home to Texas. I want to be back in my home at a wonderful institution like Stephen F. Austin. I want to be in the Piney Woods, in the home that I know and love. I love Nacogdoches.

If I do not feel that tenure is safe from excessive state meddling, I will not return. If this state votes for excessive government meddling in the tenure process, I will not return. If this state votes for policies that put me and other Texans at a competitive disadvantage, I will not return.

I want to come home. I want to serve my community - and I am good at it. Please, vote against SB 18. It matters to me.

Karla Epperson
Self - Lawyer (UT Law Class of 1997)
Houston, TX

Please do not politicize tenure. This legislation will fundamentally change the concept of tenure, something fully engrained in American higher education. It will taint the UT and Texas A&M systems and other public colleges and universities. I will strongly reconsider sending my children to Texas public universities and recommend that others also not do so.

Allison Glastad
Incoming reearch faculty (including my son)
Heath, TX

Dear Committee Members,

SB18 represents a very counterproductive approach to regulating tenured/tenure-track faculty among the public universities in Texas.

There are many reasons that this bill will do far more harm than good, however the most non-partisan, short-term argument is that the research at Texas public universities will quickly cease being some of the most outstanding in the nation. This will also kneecap the expanding biomedical industry of Texas.

The primary reason for this is much more practical than a loss of "academic freedom", it is simply that without the ability to gain tenure, the majority of candidates applying for faculty jobs (and certainly all of the best candidates) will entirely avoid applying to Texas universities. This will lead to many currently-tenured faculty (among which are very strong researchers) departing Texas universities due to the (correct) perception that the future of their departments is bleak, as the influx of new 'talent' will cease (above).

My son is such a candidate, with multiple research articles in top-tier journals, prior funding via the NIH and NSF, and extensive teaching experience. Despite having competitive offers at other strong(er) research departments outside of Texas, he recently signed an offer at UTA for a tenure-track faculty position, in part due to the strong support given to research departments at public universities in Texas. With the introduction and senate support of SB18, he is now strongly considering backing out of this offer and accepting a position at one of the other universities he has pending offers from -- as he signed an offer for a TENURE TRACK position.

This is not because of some commitment to leftist ideals, need to teach CRT to undergraduates (which would be strange for a biomedical researcher), or *obsession* with tenure. It will simply be because:

A) The department, university, and university system of Texas he was intending on joining will quickly hemorrhage new and existing faculty, particularly the best of those (with easy alternative employment options outside of Texas),

B) The rapid stagnation and following decline in the biomedical research industry of Texas (R&D companies depend on PhD students from universities), and

C) of course if choosing between a position with the possibility of tenure (currently all other states) or without (Texas), anyone would take the job with the possibility of permanent employment.

Putatively the motivation behind SB18 is an attempt by legislators to combat university faculty from pushing left-leaning ideals to students. Devastating economically-integral R&D in both the public and private sector simply in an ATTEMPT to control instruction within higher education seems like a circuitous, counter-productive approach to silencing *some* left-leaning blowhards in *some* departments.

I urge you to reconsider supporting this bill for these reasons. Not political, but economic. Not idealistic, but practical.

Grant Wiedenfeld
Self, associate professor of mass communication
West University Place, TX

Eliminating tenure would be detrimental for the State of Texas in two ways that I can speak to as a faculty person: free speech protection and talented faculty researchers.
1. First, tenure originated to protect the free speech of conservatives, as everyone knows. I often teach a Christian film by Texas filmmaker Terrence Malick, The Tree of Life, in my Film Appreciation course. Atheist students do not abide the religious content, but this award-winning film has artistic qualities that merit appreciation by all. If this bill were to pass it could lead to faculty like me being fired for showing Christian content. Conservative members of the legislature should be cautious of eliminating a free speech protection from higher education.
2. Second, Texas will lose talented faculty if tenure is eliminated. Texas competes with other states that offer positions with tenure, and those states will gain an edge in top research. My state university is hiring faculty right now for the fall, and three candidates have already withdrawn from one search. Other candidates are hesitating to accept offers because they would prefer to work in a tenured position. For that reason, this bill would lower the standing of Texas' higher education.

Jennifer Dawes
Self; professor
Wichita Falls, TX

Passage of SB 18 will make it difficult if not impossible to recruit quality faculty for colleges and universities in the state of Texas. The threat alone of eliminating tenure has already begun to have a chilling effect on our new faculty searches. The impact on higher education in the state of Texas will be incalculable. I implore the committee to reject this bill before it does any more damage. Thank you.

Kristen Garrison, Dr.
Self, English professor and higher ed administrator
Wichita Falls, TX

This will have a devastating impact on the ability of Texas IHEs to hire qualified faculty, which in turn will impact our efforts to keep talented Texans in Texas--students are not going to attend colleges or universities that cannot provide a competitive education and networking opportunities. Concerns regarding the performance of tenured faculty should be addressed in a more productive fashion, with attention to assessing and improving the tenure policies on campuses.

Teresa Danze, Dr.
Self, Associate Professor of Classics
Dallas, TX

Trust. When I think of how eliminating tenure at an institution of higher learning will affect faculty and students, I return to this fundamental agreement called trust upon which the academic community and the public depend to grow in knowledge and wisdom. Students must be able to trust that their faculty are presenting their subjects honestly, clearly, and without the pressure of being fired for heterodox interpretations to cloud their expressions. Faculty cannot write or educate using the full range of methodologies and ideas that their fields allow if they are in constant fear that conclusions contrary to those of their department Chair or Provost will put them out of a job. Tenured Faculty operate with one another on a level of trust that we are each seeking the good for our respective fields and the public, that our employment from the beginning was based on a belief and expectation that we can be trusted to do excellent and honest work and that we had seven years to show that this initial impression was valid. Evidence to the contrary has never been and should never be protected. The fact that 50% of T-T hires in public institutions are dismissed should demonstrate that their system is working. Tenuring faculty ensures that excellent and honest work continues without restriction to an academic's ability to think and create, a restriction that could be based not only on fear but on ideological, political or other influences from those in power. To eliminate tenure would have a ripple effect on every role within the academy, building suspicion among faculty that a Dean or Provost's politics, theoretical biases or, worse, personal enmity, could lead to heightened scrutiny of every word, look or the absence of either to rationalize the end of someone's contract. Faculty are valued for their intellect but that does not mean they are not human and therefore subject to the vulnerabilities we all experience - fear and suspicion. To say that students, families and the public would not share such responses to the public academy in turn ignores human nature. Eliminating this industry standard of tenure will erode public trust in the very institutions meant to serve them, build mistrust among faculty and administrators and stifle the most valuable and irreplaceable commodity of the academy – the human imagination.

Thomas Thompson, Dr.
self, assistant professor
Austin, TX

As a university professor who recently moved to Texas to take a tenure track position at the University of Texas at Austin and someone whose livelihood would be negatively impacted by the requirements of this bill, I am writing to urge the House Higher Education Committee to consider the chilling effect the removal of the possibility of tenure at state institutions in Texas would have on free academic inquiry, to say nothing of the challenges Texas universities would face in the future when trying to recruit top talent to professorial roles without the existence of tenure. Without the promise and protection of tenure, Texas universities will no longer be able to attract the most qualified academics to join their institutions or keep talented faculty who do not yet have tenure from leaving, and the quality of higher education in the state would be imperiled. Very few, if any, highly qualified faculty members that already have tenure at institutions in other states would be willing to take a new position in Texas without the presence of tenure. SB18 would thus both lead to a substantial brain drain at all levels of Texan institutions of higher education and stymie any attempts to make up for this loss of talent by hiring top tenured faculty away from other institutions outside of the state. Furthermore, without the long-term career stability that tenure provides, researchers at Texas universities will be at a distinct disadvantage in comparison with colleagues at institutions that do have tenure when competing for long-term grants from the federal government, private institutions, and other funding agencies.

Dundee Lackey, Dr
Self. Associate professor.
Denton, TX

I thought you all wanted to make Texas universities more competitive. This makes us less able to attract quality faculty, eroding our classes, research, outreach, impact, snd reputation. It feels more like a long term game you're playing (to shut down universities? Part of the attack on public education?) than something done with reason or out of need. It is a(nother) disservice to the students, teachers, and citizens of Texas, and can only impact our state negatively.

Kenneth Evans, No title
self, education
Denton, TX

It isn't conservative to disrupt centuries-old norms in university tenure, but it is conservative to conserve it; freedom and liberty means the freedom to go to school and get introduced to new ideas, even (or especially) difficult ones. Texans can handle it. If you run off your professors, or keep good potential ones from coming here, the next generation is going to miss out on the productive challenge at the heart of a good education. Let universities and colleges handle their own matters and policies at their own local levels. Whatever happened to independence, liberty, and local-level self-governance? Universities are inherently "triggering," which is their great utility -- tenure allows the well peer-reviewed folks who have served their communities for years to speak and research freely, without fear of cancellation. Freely! Ain't we a liberty-loving state, in favor of freedom? State control of the academy has a sad, bad history... just look 20th Century China. Thanks for reading. Now go vote smart.

Wendy Woodland, Director, Advocacy & Communication
Texas Library Association
Austin, TX

The Texas Library association opposes SB 18 related to tenure and employment status at public institutions of higher education in Texas.

Texas is fortunate to be home to several of the most highly respected public institutions of higher education in the country. They have achieved this status through tireless efforts to recruit the best and brightest educators and researchers to not only teach students, but to conduct research that makes real, lasting, and positive impact on the world.

Research is one of the main ways that universities fulfill their mission to achieve excellence in education and public service. Eliminating tenure directly impacts the focus on research and the mission of academic libraries.

Tenure provides assurance that research projects funded by multi-year grants will be completed and the terms of the contract fulfilled. The state risks losing millions of dollars of research grants and funding secured by tenured employees.

Additionally, loss of tenure would make it extremely difficult for Texas universities to compete for and recruit quality faculty and retain current faculty. This would directly impact the quality of the education students receive and make our universities less attractive to students seeking a top-notch college education. The eventual decline in enrollment would not only negatively impact the institutions, but the surrounding communities which benefit from the economic activity generated by college students.

Tenure is not a guarantee of employment - tenured faculty can be fired for not performing well in teaching, research, or service. Post tenure review is a necessary part of every tenure policy to ensure high quality teaching, research, and service at every university. Tenure is a critical part of assuring a free exchange of ideas in classrooms and throughout academic institutions.

Brian Fehler
Self - Professor
Fort Worth, TX

I'm providing testimony of my opposition to SB 18. As a fifth-generation Texan and an educated citizen, I possess both a deep love for our state and a long familiarity with its (excellent) institutions of higher education. I am grieved to see legislative action taking place this term that will, if those harmful bills are signed into law, damage the reputation, competitiveness, and effectiveness of Texas' great public universities.

After earning three degrees at two private universities in Texas, I entered the highly competitive market of the academic job search. (You might not know this, but most tenure-track academic job postings attract many dozen—even sometimes several hundred—applicants; as a result, each faculty member holding a tenure-track position has proven their value after considerable vetting.) For the most part, the academic job market is a national one, and I applied for jobs, and received offers, from universities both in and outside of Texas. Because I wanted to remain in my home state, and to be near my nephew as he grew up and my parents as they grew older, I happily accepted a faculty position here. I have never regretted that decision. However, had a tenure-track job not been on the table here in the state, I certainly would have felt obliged to take one elsewhere. Sadly, SB 18, if passed into law, will without a doubt result in proud native sons and daughters of Texas who are pursuing academic careers to leave the state we all love.

When students and alumni are asked what they love about their alma maters, they so often mention faculty—not the administrators, not restrictive policies imposed by legislators, not the dining hall food. They mention their professors because of what we teach them and the mentoring we provide them. Every day, I see fellow faculty members working hard to make our state universities places where students learn and thrive—and as a result, so many of those students remain in Texas and make vital contributions here. Faculty are also members of their communities, where so many do so much good—a spirit of mentorship and service inspires many professors to volunteer in the communities beyond their universities, as I do personally by mentoring with Big Brothers and Big Sisters and serving Holy Communion in my church.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," my Grandad used to say at least once a week. When it comes to Texas' state universities, they not only are not broken, they're some of the best in country, even in the world. The work of faculty—teaching, research, service—contributes mightily to the greatness of those universities, and tenure-track and tenured lines are what bring—and keep—the best faculty here. Without tenure, the reputation, competitiveness, and effectiveness of our great state's great universities will decline—and no proud son or daughter of the Lone Star State wants to see that happen. Please oppose SB 18; do not send it forward to the House floor.

Beth Wright
self, professor
Arlington, TX

Tenured faculty are dedicated to continually improving the teaching and the curriculum of their institution. Their scholarly research is nationally competitive and brings millions of dollars to Texas. They are reviewed each year. Students at universities ask professors for letters of recommendation for internships, professional occupations, graduate study because these professors have seen them flourish for years and they know their work. If tenure is abolished excellent faculty will leave Texas and the teaching and research done in Texas will no longer attain the excellence which we have dedicated ourselves to building. Each faculty member represents hundreds and thousands of students affected. This semester I am teaching 100 students. I oppose SB 18. It is unnecessary. If passed it will damage higher education.

Andrea Gore
Self (University Professor)
Austin, TX

My name is Andrea Gore, and I'm here as a private citizen of TX, taking personal time off from my job as a Professor of Pharmacy at UT-Austin.

My name is Andrea Gore, and I'm speaking as a private citizen of TX. I'm also a Professor of Pharmacy at UT-Austin. I am writing to testify against SB 18.

I teach hundreds of students each year in the classroom, and hundreds of undergraduate students have conducted research in my lab. These are the future workforce in medicine, biomedical research, and data sciences.

I have tenure, earned through hard work and a rigorous internal and external review process. At UT I've brought in $10 million in grant funding, with another $7.5 million award expected in June. It took years of research and failed experiments, and eventually successes, to get to where I am today. Tenure allowed me to take the kind of risks needed to do cutting edge research, make discoveries, and change our understanding of the developing brain.

Although tenured, I am accountable to the state of TX and receive an in-depth review each and every year. Every 6 years, all faculty have a comprehensive post-tenure review. These reviews have consequences.

What will TX look like under SB 18? SB 18 will have catastrophic unintended consequences that will reverberate across the state.

Our students will be deprived of the best educators and researchers in the country when faculty make an exodus for other states. These will include faculty in healthcare professions, law, engineering, and business. And TX universities will sink in the rankings and no longer be competitive with other states. The best TX students will go elsewhere. Remember, TX is part of the USA, in other states where tenure will still exist.

What will replace tenure, if abolished? I've heard suggestion of a 7-year contract similar to MD Anderson Cancer Center. That won't work. MDACC differs from a traditional university in 4 key ways:

- Laser focus on cancer (unique opportunity for cancer researchers & clinicians)
- Lack of competition (only a few cancer centers in the country)
- Set-aside funding from CPRIT specific to cancer research ($6B)
- Completely different job (MDACC faculty don't have to teach or do much service).

Abolishing tenure will be disastrous to the state of TX. Please vote against SB 18.

Thank you for your consideration.

Adam Clulow
Self (University professor)
Austin, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to submit an online comment. My name is Adam Clulow and I am speaking for myself as a private individual and not on behalf of any organization or institution. I am also a tenured professor of Japanese History at UT Austin.

I wish to submit a written testimonial against Senate Bill 18.

I was born in South Africa and have degrees from South Africa, Japan and the US. I've taught or studied in four continents. I joined UT in 2019 after over a decade teaching in Australian universities. I wish to speak as something of an outsider who has spent most of their career outside of US academia. US universities are quite simply the envy of the world. I have sat through numerous meetings in my previous university in Australia in which the participants talked at length about the remarkable strength and quality of US universities.

It is easy to understand why private universities which charge $60,000 plus of tuition fees have been able to achieve such heights but the real admiration was reserved for state systems like the University of Texas system which can offer an extraordinary learning experience for students while charging affordable tuition. These systems are, in a word, miraculous. They have no duplicate even in peer countries like Australia, Japan or the United Kingdom. I know this firsthand.

The strength of universities like UT Austin rests on their superb faculty, their significant financial resources and their culture of excellence. It also depends on the tenure system which gives faculty the capacity to pursue cutting edge research while enabling the university to recruit the very best researchers from across the world. When I joined UT, I gave up a grant totaling $550,000 dollars of research funding to make the move. If UT did not offer tenure, I would never have considered leaving Australia.

Senate Bill 18 would significantly reduce the strength of the UT system and it would permanently damage the institution at which I work: UT Austin. It would be greeted with genuine delight by universities in Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom and elsewhere who would see a once in a generation chance to poach UT faculty and to swiftly supplant UT in global university rankings. The same would apply to other world-class institutions across Texas including Texas A&M which would be equally at risk.

Senate Bill 18 would be a generous gift to overseas universities that lack the resources to compete with the University of Texas and Texas A&M. It would delight competitors across the world and it would permanently damage the capacity of these great universities to recruit the best professors and to give students the best possible education. It would, in short, undo the miracle that is public education in Texas.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Xuefang Ren, Assistant professor
Self
Houston, TX

The SB 18 will ruin the education in Texas!

Heng Hu, Research scientist
Self
Houston, TX

The SB 18 will destroy the culture and higher education in Texas. It won't be able to attact or keep good scientists in Texas as well as good students.

Jesse Orth
Self
Bishop, TX

I am writing about recently passed senate bill 18 which will end up in your house committee on higher education. This bill is devastating for higher education in the state of Texas. The bill cites the need for annual accountability for tenured faculty members, which is something that already exists. Tenure is by no means a guarantee of a job for life as the bill states, all full time faculty members undergo annual evaluations on their records of teaching, research and scholarly activities, professional development, and service. If any faculty member does not meet the standards in any of these areas a remediation plan is put in place. If the deficient area is not remediated tenured (and other level) faculty members are demoted and/or fired. Tenure is really a tool of shared governance and protection for faculty from administration who might disagree on areas of research and/or teaching philosophies.

This bill claims to "protect" and make room for new and innovative ideas and it will not do that in any way, shape, or form. This bill will decimate the high achieving and creative faculty members that it wants to support. Faculty members who are creative and innovative will be leaving the state of Texas to take tenure-track jobs out of state. We have seen this sort of legislation have exactly that effect in states such as Wisconsin and Iowa where landmark institutions like the University of Wisconsin struggle to attract and retain the innovative, high profile faculty that used to compete for jobs at that institution.

If you care about the legacy of Texas higher education, the innovation, research, and prestige that universities like UT and Texas A&M bring to the state you will not support senate bill 18.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jesse Orth

Kimberly Grotewold
Self, PhD student
San Antonio, TX

As someone in the process of earning a PhD degree at a Texas University, I understand the importance of having high quality faculty who desire to stay in their current position. Providing tenure provides the incentive to stay and grow their expertise, teaching, and mentoring abilities at a given university. Withdrawing tenure will cause them to seek employment at institutions providing tenure or even outside higher education. As I prepare to potentially enter a different level of the workforce than I currently enjoy, I will seek academic positions that offer tenure and therefore would look to take my knowledge, talents, and skills outside the state. High quality faculty (often tenured or in tenure-track positions) are more likely to get grant funding which can support important research and community programs. Students can also participate in these research experiences as a high impact, experiential learning practice. Finally, as the parent of a high achieving high school student, I would like to feel confident that he could receive a world class education at a public institution in Texas. Removing tenure could significantly degrade the quality of the higher education he could receive in-state; therefore, I would seriously consider sending him elsewhere.

Patrick Larkin
self, College Professor (Biochemistry)
Corpus Christi, TX

GPS, genetic sequencing, Google, WiFi, the Hepatitis B vaccine. All technologies whose principles, or final product, were developed by academic scientists - professors. Such achievements were possible because of the academic freedom that allows faculty to work on wide-ranging, long-term projects. Academic tenure is a form of security for faculty, modeled after judicial tenure, and is hard-earned. It is only conferred after successful completion of a rigorous, multi-year, probationary period. For those who receive it - and many do not - tenure provides the space to address difficult questions in their area of expertise, ones that may be deemed of little immediate, practical value. It provides a reasonable degree of economic security to make the profession more attractive to men and women of ability, most of whom could earn far more had they chosen a non-academic career. Finally, it enables faculty to incorporate their findings into their teaching, part of the university's essential function of creating and disseminating knowledge.

Critics often portray tenure as a guarantee of lifetime employment, one that can never be revoked but this is not accurate. Tenure does not protect an employee from disciplinary action, or dismissal, for incompetence, neglect of duty, dishonesty, or other form of professional misconduct. They also claim that the security of tenure saps initiative, but there is no good evidence that it leads to an overall decline in the quality or productivity of faculty. Faculty at all state institutions undergo annual reviews of performance. Many institutions also require them to undergo post-tenure reviews every few years, a more thorough and rigorous evaluation of how they are meeting their professional obligations.

The elimination of tenure would have serious economic and social costs for Texas. Without tenure, colleges and universities would have to offer higher salaries to faculty to offset the uncertainty of employment. It would lead to higher turnover, hindering an academic institution's ability to offer specialized courses, or support particular majors or graduate programs. The absence of tenure will make it more difficult to attract top talent to Texas universities, and deprive our state of the creativity, ingenuity, and skill of some of the best scientists, engineers, clinicians, and teachers available. The vast system of higher education in the US, including Texas universities, is the envy of the world and an engine of economic prosperity. Its foundation rests upon strong public and private support, a key component of which is tenure. In this case good sense suggests that this is not a problem that needs to be solved. If it isn't broke, don't fix it.

Xuefang Ren, Assistant professor
UTHealth
Sugar Land, TX

This is a very bad idea! The pass of SB 18 will badly affects higher education because excellent scientists wouldn't stay in Texas without a tenure mechanism given a much lower salary scale than other states. Therefore the quality of universities will be significantly lowered without good scientists and students would not stay in Texas, which would cause a vicious cycle for the education system in Texas.

Andrew Milson, Dr
Self
Plano, TX

I am writing in opposition to SB18. I'm writing as a private citizen and not as a representative of any organization or institution. This bill has made Texas a laugingstock across the country and has already done significant damage to Texas universities. Texas has worked very hard and invested significant funding in to make the top universities in Texas world class. The Texas Research University Fund has enabled more Texas institutions to become research institutions with international reputations for top notch research, facilities, and faculty. Now top scholars and researchers are wondering why they would want to come to a state (or stay employed by a state government) that does not respect one of the most basic rights of faculty. This is tantamount to saying that the Texas government no longer believes in the First Amendment because a couple of people may have abused it. The Texas government should stand for expanding liberties, nit abolishing them. I am ull professor with tenure, I have worked very hard for twenty-five year to prove my research skills, teaching abilities, and service commitments to the university and community. Every six years, I undergo a rigorous review that is similar to the process of earning tenure in the first place.I recently passed my second six-year review. These review are serious. I must show that I've continued to be a scholar, a great teacher, and a citizen of the university and community. I've won teaching and research awards, as well as millions of dollars of grant funding. I'm also a fifth generation Texan. I'm so saddened to see our government attempt to undo all of the progress that Texas has made

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Jennifer Bates
Self - Seminarian
Denton, TX

I oppose this bill. We will lose top educators to other states if tenure is threatened. We should not be weakening the state higher education system but strengthening it.

Anne Nocher, Ms.
self
Dawson, TX

I am sure you are aware that we have entered an age in which the global economy rules even local choices. Should you attempt to restrict or hamper education by passing any of the Senate bills 16, 17 or 18, you will immediately restrict the ability of students everywhere in America to be able to address the globalization of the economy. Diversity is globalization. Students from Texas institutions would be handicapped in comparison to students from other states who have experience in globalization, diversity, and who have been instructed by professors who are deeply and widely versed in the effects of globalization in today's world.

Ask yourselves: do we want Texas students to become the laughingstock of today's job market upon graduation?

Professors of our finest institutions In Texas higher education must be afforded the surety of tenure in order to continue to freely experience the world and communicate that experience to today's students. These bills, 16, 17, and 18, which have only to do with restriction and punishment, censorship and ethnoculturality, have no place in our modern world.

Likewise, ask yourselves: do we want to gut Texas higher education? Or do we want Texas to become a model of modern, job-ready instruction and leadership respected world-wide?

It takes a highly diverse and accomplished, well-traveled international faculty to instill the ethics and critical thinking skill set needed to be successful in today's global job market.

Ask: why willingly handicap Texas students from the outset?

If you are going to ban anything, ban these bills. As a wise
friend who is deeply experienced in the ways of the world told me recently, "the irony of all of this is that the only thing we must not tolerate is intolerance."

Please do NOT tolerate any potential action on this bill other than to SCRAP it.

Thank you.

Fay Guarraci
Self
Austin, TX

Eliminating tenure at Texas schools, will greatly disadvantage Texas Universities. Highly desirable and competitive candidates for faculty positions will not even consider joining a Texas University faculty if tenure is not part of their employment agreement. The best and the brightest will pass over opportunities to work in Texas and choose to pursue faculty positions where tenure is still protected. Prospective faculty will have many options outside of Texas, given that most private institutions and other public Universities in the country still regard tenure with high esteem. Over time this will diminish the research, advancements, and discoveries that happen at public institutions in Texas. The consequence of this decision will have ripple effects that trickle down to private Universities. Part of the appeal of working in Texas involves the network of scientists here; if the public Universities suffer and loss out on talent, collaborations across institutions will suffer. Science will suffer, our students will suffer if we can not recruit the best minds to come to Texas.

Jennifer Adair, Dr.
self- professor
Austin, TX

I oppose the elimination of tenure. Our ability to recruit and retain nationally important faculty will be greatly damaged. I am afraid that if this bill passes, it would take decades to undo the damage. We will not be able to recruit strong assistant professors and ultimately our students and alumni would suffer from reputation loss and a lower quality education.

Lauren Smith
self
Houston, TX

Academic freedom refers to the freedom of scholars, professors, and students to pursue their intellectual interests and engage in scientific inquiry without fear of censorship, retribution, or arbitrary persecution. This includes the freedom to conduct research and express their ideas and opinions.

Academic freedom is a fundamental principle of universities and is enshrined in many national and international declarations and laws. It is seen as essential to the advancement of knowledge and to the promotion of intellectual diversity and social progress. Academic freedom is widely respected and valued in the academic community and society.

Academic job security refers to the stability and protections afforded to academic professionals in their employment at universities and colleges. It is designed to provide a level of job security that allows academics to focus on their research and teaching activities without fear of arbitrary dismissal or other forms of interference. Tenure is the most well-known form of academic job security, and it typically involves a probationary period during which the professor's performance is evaluated by colleagues and administrators.

The importance of academic job security lies in its role in protecting academic freedom and promoting intellectual independence. Academic job security allows academics to pursue their scholarly interests and make important contributions to their fields of study.

Tenure is typically granted to professors or other academic professionals who have demonstrated a high level of competence, excellence, and commitment to their field. Tenured faculty have the freedom to pursue their research interests without fear of losing their job. This is intended to protect academic freedom and encourage innovation and intellectual diversity within universities and other academic institutions.

Tenure is granted to professors or academic professionals after a certain number of years of service and demonstrated excellence in their field. In practice, tenured professors have greater freedom to conduct research, and express their opinions without fear of retribution. This system is intended to promote academic freedom, protect intellectual diversity, and ensure that the best and brightest scholars continue to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their fields.

Also, the purpose of tenure is to protect academic freedom and promote intellectual independence by insulating professors from political or administrative pressures that might interfere with their research. Tenure is usually awarded after a probationary period of several years, during which time the professor's performance is evaluated by colleagues and administrators. Tenure had become a common feature of academic employment contracts, and it remains a key component of academic job contracts today. Tenure remains a widely accepted and important feature of academic employment in many countries around the world.

Michael Domjan
None
Leander, TX

Eliminating tenure at institutions of higher education is certain to reduce the quality of the faculty. The reason is simple. A decision to award tenure to a faculty member is a much more serious decision than deciding to renew a limited-term contract. Therefore, higher standards are used in tenure decisions. I had a 50-year career in higher education. I have seen it all. Most notably, I have seen numerous faculty who were not good enough to get tenure move to a renewable contract teaching position and then have that contract renewed repeatedly so that these individuals ended up teaching for as long as tenured faculty members. The only difference was that they were not good enough to get tenure. The implication is simple. If you want to reduce the quality of faculty at Texas institutions of higher education, eliminate tenure. I hope the Texas legislature will have the good sense not to embrace such mediocrity.

Francisco Gonzalez-Lima, Dr.
The Texas Academy of Science
Austin, TX

This testimony is against SB 18.

We would like to express the support for merit-based tenure by the Texas Academy of Science, the original and oldest organization of scientists in Texas. Our view is shared by the top faculty that we wish to retain and recruit to colleges and universities in Texas. The legislators and public need to know these five facts about tenure:

1. Merit-based tenure is awarded only after rigorous, formal review of an individual's merit in teaching, research, and service, and is maintained via regular, intensive post-tenure reviews.

2. Merit-based tenure enables research, education, and innovation to proceed based on evidence and independent from government influence. Free inquiry and investigation, freedom of speech, and open dissent represent cornerstones of student learning and the advancement of knowledge, which in turn produce graduates who will serve and benefit society.

3. Merit-based tenure in Texas public universities is needed for the research dollars brought each year by tenured faculty to help support their campuses. For example, my UT lab alone is currently funded by $9 million in external research funds; some of which go towards university infrastructure.

4. Merit-based tenure promotes stability in the governance and organization of colleges and universities, which in turn promotes long-term pursuit of knowledge, education, and student mentorship.

5. Merit-based tenure also provides a mechanism for the recruitment and retention of world-class scholars, which in turn promotes recruitment of world-class students.

We all should support the institution of merit-based tenure for its benefits to Texas colleges and universities, and Texas society at large.

Respectfully submitted,

Francisco Gonzalez-Lima, PhD,
George I. Sanchez Centennial Professor at The University of Texas at Austin.
President of The Texas Academy of Science (2022-2023).

Seth Chandler, Mr.
Self, professor
Houston, TX

I am a long time tenured faculty member at the University of Houston Law Center but the views expressed here are my own individually and do not necessarily reflect those of the institution. I have two objections to the bill. The first is in its treatment of faculty who were hired on tenure track but who may now not be eligible to receive tenure. I believe this is a breach of promise from Texas, is likely to end up in costly litigation involving the Texas constitution and the contracts clause of the federal Constitution, and most importantly is genuinely unfair to these individuals, most of whom do not pose the sort of ideological threat that the bill appears focused upon. Even if you do nothing else, could you please grandfather those individuals in along with faculty who already have tenure. Second, if one were designing the university system from scratch, I understand why granting tenure might be a questionable proposition. But we live in a competitive world in which most states continue with tenure and almost all private institutions in Texas have tenure. I do not see how we will be able to hire the best and brightest People to educate our kids if we cannot compete and offer this form of job security. This is not only true in my own field of law, but also in fields language politics should not even play a role such as mathematics, chemistry, and many others. I have heard the argument that the MD Anderson Cancer center manages to thrive without tenure. But most of the institutions that this bill will affect, though terrific in their own right, are not among the leading institutions in the world. Moreover, treatment of cancer and cancer research is not generally subject to the same kind of political pressures for which tenure it was designed. So, I don't think the MD Anderson example is particularly useful. I happen to agree that a greater degree of ideological diversity at many Texas universities would be a good thing. But abolishing tenure is not the right answer.

Patricia Boucher
self Librarian
New Braunfels, TX

Without the opportunity for tenure, Texas universities will not be able to attract top talent. Since pay at these institutions does not keep up with the rising costs of living here, we need *more* incentives to bring applicants to Texas, not reasons for them to turn away. The loss of the opportunity for tenure, along with the minor protections of intellectual freedom and due process that it provides, will be yet another nail in the coffin. I have watched the number of applicants for positions decline, and those applications that arrive bringing in less qualified persons. I have heard from colleagues across the country and around the world - all of whom ask me what is going on in our state, and what could possibly incentivize them to come here when politicians meddle so much in so many aspects of education (including tenure).
I am having a harder and harder time trying to come up with a good response to those questions.
Please do not support SB 18. It will keep top talent out of Texas Universities, putting at risk our status of educational excellence around the country and the world.

John Yeazell
Self, instructional faculty UT Austin
Austin, TX

I am here as a private citizen on my personal time off from my job as a nontenure track professor at UT Austin to give my strong support to continuing tenure at the Universities of Texas. Dropping tenure will decimate the high quality education and research that goes on at these Universities. The adverse climate will make it tough to compete for the best new faculty. The current best tenure track assistant professors will look for other positions. The loss of these junior faculty will push the best senior professors, those with the highest research profile and best funded, to consider offers from peer institutions. Once the best people are gone, the quality and reputation of these Universities will deteriorate and so will the job prospects of our graduates.

I oppose SB18 because of the irreparable damage it could do to the great Universities of Texas.

Sincerely,

John Yeazell

Carl Jones, Mr
TDP Rural Caucus State Field Coordinator Travis County Precinct 367 Chair
Spicewood, TX

Attention all Tx House members. Please REJECT SB 18. Everyone knows that TENURE is a vitally important protection of academic freedom at a university that guards faculty pursuing new ideas or controversial work from being fired or punished. It gives faculty researchers job security as they conduct research that can sometimes be controversial, nonpartisan or even at odds with certain overzealous politicians like Lt Gov Dan Patrick. Attracting top researchers and promoting world class education resources for Texans is much more important than pandering to Dan Patrick's juvenile small minded agenda.
Without the ability to award tenure, university leaders have said it would be very difficult to attract top faculty and research which is for the benefit of our young Texans.

Jo Foley
self/none
Henderson, TX

I support SB 18. Often there are professors that start out as good teachers, but get tired, fed up or just change and they no longer are effective or good for the students. I do not believe they should have a tenure status , but, be evaluated as how they are each year. Yes to SB 18

Russell Frohardt, Dr
Self. Dean for Academics
Austin, TX

Tenure is vital for faculty to teach without fear of retribution from legislators and administrators. It is vital for them to be able to teach and study the most timely, important, and controversial subjects.

Andrew Gaudet
self, researcher
Austin, TX

Hi, I am Andrew, writing as a private citizen. I am also faculty at the University of Texas at Austin. Please keep tenure, for the benefit of all Texans.

“What starts here changes the world.” The mission statement of the University of Texas at Austin. I have seen how this is true at UT-Austin – what an inspiring place to research, teach, and thrive. Faculty are innovative. Students are brilliant. Even my young son and daughters have experienced the magic of UT, at the Child Development Center.

Just yesterday, I attended a commencement ceremony at the Moody Center and could feel the vibrations and sounds of love fill the arena – hundreds of enthusiastic graduates and thousands of proud family members shared smiles, handshakes, and hugs.

And it’s not just UT. I have visited Texas A&M, which has excellent facilities, and there are countless other great universities across the state.

But I am concerned. I am concerned that there is a grave misunderstanding that will kneecap decades of efforts that ensure University of Texas is a place that inspires innovation and excellence.

Tenure is important because it enables faculty to speak freely – this includes both conservative and progressive views. It is also important because innovation takes time. It is not possible to easily define or pigeonhole research progress every year. Many important projects take years to develop and refine; the most impactful papers or grants often are published or awarded after up to seven years! Tenure provides this protection so that research can be completed effectively as results allow.

The upshot of removing tenure – or even discussing the removal of tenure – is that Texans will suffer. Students will suffer. Top applicants for faculty positions will choose to go elsewhere. Sitting faculty who remain tenured will notice the challenges in attracting innovative new faculty and students, and will gradually leave. Even UT-Austin – currently a world-renowned university that inspires innovation and creativity – will likely wilt and fade into a “has-been” university.

If tenure is removed, the great state of Texas will go from being a place that attracts the best and brightest students from around the world, to a state that bleeds our best students to other states. We do not want to open this can of worms.

Please understand that maintaining tenure will have wide-ranging benefits – from attracting the very best faculty and students to our state, to maintaining and building our innovative state universities. Texan students deserve a top-notch education that can only be ensured if we maintain our tenure system.

Brandon Barnes, Dr.
Self
Athens, TX

The simple fact is this: the purpose of tenure is to allow professors in all disciplines to focus their efforts on research. This impacts business, science and technology, communications, and economics—all disciplines from which society derives many and obvious benefits.

Awarding tenure follows after extensive review and a probationary period of several years. The idea is that it should be awarded on a firm basis following demonstrable value and quality. This is not an ill-considered institution.

Society deserves to have professionals who are dedicated to research efforts not only uninterrupted but supported by our collective trust. We communicate that trust through tenure, and with that trust they embark on exploring new and promising avenues of research, which they then share with their peers and with their students. Tenure ensures the benefits which accrues to society.

I ask those considering this bill to think of the scientists, technological innovators, business researchers, economists, and those in other disciplines that bring many and obvious benefits to our society and to the hundreds of thousands of university students who will benefit from their teaching and influence. Tenure does not benefit only those who hold the jobs. It benefits the disciplines and the students.

I would ask that those considering this bill to reject it for its clear lack of imagination and resentful character. It promises to do us all harm.

Sharmila Rudrappa, Dr.
Self, Teacher
Austin, TX

Tenure and DEI initiatives in Texas strengthen US national security. Weakening tenure and DEI in Texas colleges and universities will also weaken our capacity, as a state, to advance the global interests of the United States.

Let me explain. After World War II, the US government recognized that our security and economic competitiveness depended on American experts who were knowledgeable about world regions, foreign languages, and international affairs. The result was the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), passed in 1958, which funded a nation-wide network of “Area Studies” centers at select American universities.

The University of Texas at Austin was one of the early beneficiaries of this funding. Since the 1950s UT has built a national and international reputation in Area Studies. Today, the university receives approximately $2.5 million a year from the Department of Education to support area studies centers. We are the only institution in the US south to host centers in European Studies; Russian, Eastern European and Eurasian Studies; Latin American Studies; Middle Eastern Studies; and South Asian Studies.

These centers train students and do research, and facilitate connections across the state, nation, and world. We work with K-12 teachers across Texas on language pedagogy. We do research and provide training that bears directly on the present conflict between Ukraine and Russia. We partner with institutions across the world on everything from film studies to disinformation analysis.

This excellence in area studies is now at risk. These centers depend on faculty to teach and conduct research. Without tenure, there is a strong risk of faculty flight to institutions that are more supportive of faculty research. This will erode UT’s national capacity to deal intelligently and wisely with the rest of the world. The kinds of networks and knowledge that have grown over decades within area studies centers in UT can’t simply or quickly be reassembled elsewhere, at other institutions. If Area Studies at UT are defunded, it will represent a net loss for the nation.

The international landscape has shifted dramatically since the programs’ birth, which was very much a product of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. But the rationale for supporting US expertise in the many regions and languages of the world has, if anything, strengthened in our present. Dramatic changes in the geopolitical and global economic landscapes since 9/11 continue to create the need for American expertise in foreign affairs.

The weakening of tenure profoundly erodes the ability of Texans to contribute to national security and global competitiveness. If it occurs, it will be an entirely self-inflicted wound. The alternative is to re-commit to a broader vision of the role of Texas in the world. If we aspire to be a leader in the world, we need to know the world.

Sylvia Campbell
self, retired teacher
The Woodlands, TX

Dear Members of the Higher Education Committee,
I am urging you to vote NO on SB 18. The bill does not seem to understand two things:
1. Tenured faculty are currently subject to annual performance evaluations and resulting corrective action.
2. Texas will lose any competitive edge in attracting and maintaining faculty if tenure is eliminated.
SB 18 is bad for Texas. Please VOTE NO on SB 18.
Thank you,
Sylvia Campbell

Jennifer Dulin, Dr.
Self, Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University
Bryan, TX

I am writing as a private citizen who is also a tenure-track faculty member at Texas A&M University. In fact, I am applying for tenure this month after 5 years as a faculty member.

An overwhelming majority of the faculty at Texas A&M strongly believe that getting rid of tenure will demolish the quality of research and teaching that is conducted at Texas A&M and other Texas universities. This is because we will not be able to attract competitive faculty candidates to join our ranks - they will not come here if they cannot hope to earn tenure. This is a fact that we cannot ignore. It is true that in very rare cases, faculty who are tenured can become "lazy" or erratic in their behavior. This is true in any career path - for example, a senior partner at a law firm who stops showing up to work, or a CEO who begins making drastic and harmful policy changes within his corporation. In these cases, there would be a vote of no confidence or similar procedure in place to make sure this person stops causing harm and/or wasting company resources, if they do not do their job. In my department at Texas A&M, there is a similar post-tenure review process in place. If a tenured faculty does not maintain a satisfactory performance in research and teaching, or fails to adhere to the principles and values of Texas A&M University, the post-tenure review process allows for that faculty member to be terminated. This practice should be codified and enforced at Texas universities, as a mechanism for individual units to shed tenured faculty members who are not doing their jobs or actively doing harm. However, tenure should absolutely not be removed full-stop from Texas universities.

Tenure is not a "bubble" that shields us from the real world. We tenured and tenure track faculty are scientists who work extremely hard to get and keep our jobs, to receive funding for our research, and to achieve excellence in teaching. This career path selects for individuals who are highly ambitious, hardworking, intelligent, and leaders in our fields. The great majority of us will not slow our momentum after receiving tenure - rather, we will continue to perform world-class research, developing cures for diseases and engineering new technology that puts our universities on the global map. If tenure is taken away, we will not attract the same quality of researchers and engineers to our institutions. The quality of our research and teaching will rapidly crumble. We will no longer be known as world-class innovators. It is critical that the Texas legislature understands these repercussions.

Marcella Clinard, Dr.
Self, diversity staff at a university
Denton, TX

SB 18 is an attempt to undermine higher education. Tenure and academic freedom should be governed by universities rather than politicians. The effects of this bill will be catastrophic for our universities and research efforts in Texas, which will impact our students, workforce, and economy. Voting for this bill sends the clear message that the state of Texas is hostile to education, academic freedom, and free speech.

Joseph Sorg, Dr.
self
College Station, TX

I am writing as private citizen who is also a tenured Professor at Texas A&M University. Over the course of my 13 years (beginning as an Assistant Professor and earning tenure in 2016), I have secured millions of dollars in NIH funding, published nearly 50 papers on mechanisms of infectious disease, and taught 1,000s of undergraduate students. I love every aspect of my job at Texas A&M University. Tenure is the backbone of American Universities. Without tenure, research can become influenced by changing winds in politics and funding – rather than solid hypothesis driven science that has led to breakthroughs in all scientific areas. The absence of tenure at Texas Universities will lead to drastic reduction in funding at our Universities, loss of the best teachers for our students, and the drastic reduction of Texas' status as a major hub for research. Currently, our Universities can recruit the best researchers in their fields who secure funding and use this funding to support graduate students and undergraduate students in their research labs. The loss of tenure will lead to these researchers (likely including myself) to seek employment elsewhere. I fully understand the optics of tenure and I have had to dispel misconceptions about what tenure actually means to friends and family. In short, I can be fired with cause. But I cannot be fired for having major disagreements with University administrators who I feel are taking the University in the wrong direction. Moreover, the University cannot dictate what research my laboratory undertakes and where to send the data for publication. These two aspects of tenure are the most important. Yes, there are a VERY small fraction of tenured professors who do not pull their weight. But, this is true for every field there is. It is the role of the Departments to help put these small faction of faculty back on track for their research or ensure that the begin to increase the amount of other activities in the University (e.g., teaching). The bills currently in the House committee (SB 17 and SB 18) will destroy Texas' ability to recruit the best scientist and will lead to a bleed in top talent currently at the Universities. I urge the House to vote No on this as the repercussions will take a generation to undo.

Huang Xing
self Engineer
Houston, TX

I am opposing SB18, which would remove tenure at Texas public universities.

Tenure is far from being a gift bestowed on a faculty without consideration of merit, accountability, and responsibility. Tenure is awarded in recognition of outstanding research, teaching, and service. Professors work hard to earn that distinction and tenure provides the security and long-run horizon to tackle hard problems. Removing tenure would make Texas universities far less attractive and competitive in recruiting top researchers and faculty.

Tenure also protects academic freedom from unduly political influences. Faculty can ask hard and research sometimes controversial questions. Students would benefit from that critical perspective on different issues. Removing tenure would eliminate that important part of Texas public higher education.

I urge members of the Texas House to vote NO to SB18.

Julia Mickenberg, Dr.
self, professor
Austin, TX

When lawmakers call for legislation that ends Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts (SB17), that insists teaching be value neutral (SB 16) and that ends tenure (SB18) they might be thinking about people like me: a tenured professor who teaches controversial subjects. But this legislation would be bad for all Texans, of whatever politics. Moreover, it is based on faulty assumptions about what happens in college classrooms, especially humanities classes. Whatever our politics, all of us in Texas need innovators, leaders, and engaged citizens who think for themselves. The subjects I teach (on aspects of American culture) might seem ripe for inserting left-wing propaganda. The subject of my research and publications could raise even more eyebrows, if the assumption is that my research is designed to push a political agenda (it is not). But let me make something clear: although I do research on and even sometimes teach about radicals, in my capacity as a professor and scholar I have no interest in pushing a political agenda, on my students or on anyone else. My job as a humanities scholar is to ask questions, to follow the evidence, and to tell a story that this evidence lets me tell. Scholarly books are not opinion pieces or blogs; my own books and articles were based on years of research and were vetted at multiple stages. As a teacher I train students in skills like asking good questions, learning to evaluate evidence and to use peer-reviewed scholarship. I teach them to refine their arguments (even when they put forth positions with which I might not personally agree) and to become better writers and speakers. I am not teaching them what to think, I am teaching them how to think. In my many years of teaching undergraduates, some of my best students have been conservatives who are open about their views. Others have been liberal. But in both cases these students have told me how much they appreciated what they learned in my classes. I've supported them with letters of recommendation and celebrated their successes. My goal is not to make students see the world the way I see it. It is to equip them with the background and skills to pursue their own questions, to find and evaluate evidence, and to become professionals and contributors to society. There is simply no way that UT will remain "a university of the first class" if Texas gets rid of tenure. SB16 and SB17 will have just as dire if less obvious consequences. If SB 17 and SB 16 (or versions of them), pass the university will not be competitive in a range of major grants, and the efforts at inclusion–which assure that everyone (including conservative students) feels welcome and free to express themselves–will give way to narrow-mindedness and a chilling atmosphere. Universities and colleges will not be able to hire the best scholars and teachers and students won't gain the tools to be innovative leaders, critical thinkers, and engaged citizens. Please do not pass these bills.

Jennifer Ebbeler
self
Austin, TX

My name is Jennifer Ebbeler. I am writing to you as a private citizen. I am a tenured Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Texas at Austin, where I have taught for 20 years. I am opposed to SB 18.

Should SB 18 become law in TX, it would devaste the state's prestigious R1 and R2 universities. This will also be true if a version of SB 18 with significantly weakened tenure protections becomes law. Like many of my colleagues, I accepted a position and UT Austin and have remained in that position despite opportunities to change jobs because I believed that the state of Texas was deeply committed to the quality of education that we provide to our students, 90% of whom are Texas residents.

Tenure and academic freedom protect every researcher and teacher as we seek to add to existing knowledge and teach cutting edge research to our students. As a scholar of early Christianity, academic freedom is crucial to the work I do. I need to follow the evidence, not the political winds. Tenure and academic freedom do not spare "deadwood"--UT has a rigorous evaluative system to handle that (largely insignificant) problem. Rarely, tenure protects bullies. I know because I was subjected to years of severe harassment by the same person who sued Sarah Blakemore. Tenure was not the problem. Inept institutional leadership was the problem. Rewarding his behavior with a large salary increase and an endowed professorship in 2013 was the problem. His attacks caused me great harm, not because of tenure but because my institution's leadership failed me over and over.

My tenure means little at a university that refuses to provide the opportunity to earn tenure to my talented junior colleagues. I do not want to watch younger scholars treat a position at UT Austin as a post-doc, a temporary job until they land a tenure-track job elsewhere. UT has invested billions of dollars in developing the research and teaching talent of its faculty. This massive investment will mean little when current assistant professors take other jobs or leave academia. It will mean little when currently tenured Gen X and Millennials leave. It is not difficult to hire good teachers. It is very difficult to hire and develop good researchers. Good research takes years--my very well-reviewed first book, published by Oxford University Press, took 5 years to produce yet changed my field significantly. Cutting edge research requires taking chances, risking failure, sometimes developing new skillsets, and being willing to work on something for years, not weeks or months. This kind of research is possible because of the job stability that tenure affords. Without it, TX's R1 and R2 universities will not be able to provide the necessary conditions for producing ground-breaking research. R1s and R2s will no longer meet the metrics for those Carnegie rankings. UT Austin will no longer be a Top 10 public university. Within 5-7 years, the UT I love will no longer exist.

Ying Jia
Self
KELLER, TX

I oppose SB18. This bill will damage the high education in Texas. Tenure is an effective way to ensure the quality of the faculty’s research. It provides the foundation for the faculty to focus on the challenging topics for year's, and pursue the innovation. If SB 18 passes, a lot of professors will leave here, and we have no way to attract the new talented professors.

June Xu
Self
Sugar Land, TX

I oppose this bill. Tenure is the way to attract talented professors to Texas. Without tenure, it sends out a negative message to all the intellectuals that Texas do not welcome knowledge. All of the higher education will suffer collateral damage. School ranking will fall. Academic research can no longer compete with another state. Let me remind you that MD Anderson and Baylor College of Medicine both attract lots of talent and have closed relationship with UT system. And UT also has two prominent dental schools, UT dental school of Houston and UTSA. Each student paid hundreds of thousands in tuition during their four years in dental school nowadays. Not to mention MD Anderson being the number 1 cancer research institute in U.S. Can Texas really afford losing these big names?

Eric Drott
Self, educator
AUSTIN, TX

I'm writing to register my opposition to Senate Bill 18, being considered by the House Higher Education Subcommittee. As I imagine you will have heard from other testimonials, passage of this bill will do irreparable harm to public universities in the state of Texas, not just in terms of the quality of the education that students will receive but in terms of their reputation at a national and international level. In particular, the elimination of tenure will make it difficult to compete with peer institutions in other states where it remains in place. Put bluntly, it's free market economics 101: if a competitive candidate has the choice between teaching at an institution with tenure versus one without, they will choose the option that offers the best opportunities for professional advancement and success. And it is not just new faculty that Texas universities risk losing to other institutions. In addition, the resulting degradation of the quality of Texas institutions would be such that many tenured faculty will likely explore professional opportunities outside the state, if SB 18 is passed.

I would also like to dispel the myth that the granting of tenure offers faculty at universities free rein to under-perform. Nothing could be further than the truth. The overwhelming majority of professors view teaching and research as a calling. In my experience, faculty are extraordinarily self-motivated, and put in more hours at their job than they are contractually obligated to do. Indeed, many professors employed by the University of Texas system are on nine-month contracts, but continue to do research, advising, and teaching preparation throughout the summer months, despite the fact that they receive no compensation for such work. And if I may use myself as an example, since receiving tenure in 2011 my research productivity and service has if anything increased, with the result that in 2020 I received the highest award granted within my field, in recognition of my career-long contributions in terms of research.

In short, passage of SB 18 will do irreparable harm to Texas public universities, the students enrolled at these institutions, and the state as a whole.

William Wierda, Dr.
Self, Professor of Medicine, Physician
Houston, TX

I'm William G. Wierda, MD,PhD, and I'm speaking for myself as a private citizen.
I am a Professor of Medicine, with tenure at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center. I have been at UT MDACC for 22 years with term tenure for over 15 years.

I write to express my opposition to SB 18 based on my knowledge and experience of academic medicine and higher education in the medical profession, which utilizes the process of tenure.

Academic and scholastic medical professionals (clinical and laboratory scientists) of higher education are the product of higher education and have defining and unique personal and professional characteristics distinguishing them from other professionals.
1. Many years of higher education are required, sometimes with associated significant debt, delayed gratification, delayed compensation. I was 38 years old when I completed training and began my first faculty position.
2. Commitment to academic and scholastic profession is motivated by intellectual curiosity and pursuit of new knowledge, personal satisfaction of learning, discovery, and teaching the next generation.
3. Academic and scholastic medical professionals are granted freedom to pursue intellectual interests and to develop new understanding and knowledge (discovery) and to educate others about knowledge and discoveries.
4. Medical academic professionals' commitment to studying and developing knowledge and advances and research, should be independent and above commercial, financial, and political requirements or restrictions.
5. Higher medical education is not possible without educators of higher learning. Academic and scholastic professionals are dedicated to and expected to participate in higher education.

Tenure is critical to clinical and laboratory academic scientists of higher education because:
1. Tenure is acknowledgement by academic peers and institution of individuals' academic and scholastic accomplishments and contributions.
2. Provides qualifications and demonstrates ability to productively and independently study and profess discovery and knowledge for purposes of grant applications and continued work.
3. Process must be self-governed and free from political influence, pressures, and oversight, which could inadvertently and perhaps inappropriately undermine the freedom to speak, act, and pursue truth and scientific and scholastic enlightenment.

Eliminating tenure from Texas state institutions of higher medical and scientific education would have profound negative impact because:
1. It would eliminate the standard peer-review process of scholastic assessment in Texas.
2. It could potentially introduce and/or direct curriculum in medical education, not based on scientific merit but driven by political agenda in Texas.
3. It could discourage individuals from taking positions in higher education and thereby undermine medical and scientific higher education in Texas.
4. It will deter top scientists, clinicians, and educators from taking positions in the state of Texas

Patrick Gilbert, Dr.
Texas Community College Teachers Association
Austin, TX

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I write to you as Immediate Past President of the Texas Community College Teachers Association (TCCTA) in opposition to SB 18. TCCTA strongly supports the vital concept and tradition of academic freedom for our faculty and institutions. At our 2022 Annual Convention, the membership unanimously adopted a resolution stating our historic position in favor of academic freedom. We strongly oppose any legislation that seeks to limit open inquiry or discussion pertaining to any academic issue either implicitly or explicitly.

TCCTA opposes SB 18, which seeks to eliminate tenure for future professors in Texas institutions of higher education. Tenure is a vital tool in the protection of academic freedom. Faculty who undergo the rigorous process to earn tenure are able to pursue long-arc research and pedogeological/andragogical techniques to extend knowledge, innovate, and improve teaching for the benefit of students, institutions, their disciplines, and all of us. Tenure protects research and innovation from ill-advised short-term policies that might prevent full discovery, understanding, and other benefits from the efforts of scholars.

TCCTA believes in faculty accountability, and observes strong accountability measures in current law that allow institutions to dismiss any professor, tenured or not, for incompetence, non-performance, or other employee misconduct. This is evident in our Association's Code of Professional Ethics.

We want Texas to be competitive in higher education and believe that eliminating tenure would seriously hinder our state’s ability to competitively recruit faculty and students to our institutions, affecting both tenured and non-tenured faculty and institutions. Putting ourselves at such a competitive disadvantage would ultimately compromise the competitive quality of our higher education work, affecting all parts of Texas’ educational and economic life. At a time when there is a teacher shortage in public education, we do not want to create a similar situation in higher education.

Please know that TCCTA greatly appreciates the work of the legislature in supporting higher education, including current efforts increasing support and sustainability for community colleges, increasing Texas’s research capacity, and continuing our long-term efforts to provide more Texans with the opportunity for post-secondary credentials. TCCTA believes SB 18 is at odds with those policy initiatives. We always stand ready to work with the legislature to craft legislation that affects higher education. With respect, I submit this testimony in opposition to SB 18.

Sincerely,
-Patrick Gilbert
Immediate Past President, Texas Community College Teachers Association

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Jennifer Conner
self
The Woodlands, TX

I urge this committee to vote NO on SB 18. We should be focusing on bringing the best research professors and university level teacher TO Texas not driving them away. This bill will make every university level professor take a step back and reconsider staying or even coming to Texas institutions of higher learning. This bill will push Texas universities farther behind the rest of the nation by not having an attractive tenure track.

VOTE NO on SB 18.

Daniel Braaten
myself
San Antonio, TX

Hello

My name is Daniel Braaten and I am speaking for myself as a resident of Texas and I am opposed to SB 18. I am an Associate Professor of Political Science at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Faculty working conditions are student learning conditions and tenure and tenure track positions provide essential working conditions for college and university faculty members. Tenure is not something that is easy to get. It is essentially, a 6 year job interview with multiple stages of evaluation and critique. The reason faculty subject themselves to this process is that when tenure is earned it gives them the opportunity to pursue teaching and research projects without the fear of reprisal from administrators, the shifting political winds, or public pressure. The freedom to teach and research are at the core of what make a good college faculty members and good college faculty make for a better learning environment for students. Faculty who are cowed and afraid to pursue controversial topics, practices, or pedagogies are not able to give their best to their students. Faculty who are constantly wondering if this semester is their last because their employment is contingent on the whims of the administration or the state legislature are not in an environment conducive to good teaching or research. For myself, once I received tenure I was much more open to experimenting with new teaching styles. I have incorporated more civic engagement aspects to my classes which I was hesitant to do prior to earning tenure because, while overall the experience is positive for students it does require a lot more work from them which can lead to lower student evaluations. This opportunity to experiment in the classroom makes me better at my job and creates a overall better learning environment for my students. Without tenure this would not be possible. If this legislation is passed and becomes law I would be forced to find employment in another state where those protections are afforded to me.

Ray Whitlow
Self/ Instructor of Speech Communication at Texas Community College
Houston, TX

Dear Honorable Members of the Higher Education Committee:

I am respectfully against Senate Bill 18 because it would hinder me from effectively teaching students because of its ambiguous language. My name is Ray E. Whitlow, Jr., and I am speaking for myself as a private individual. I am also an instructor of speech communication at a Texas community college.

The language of SB 18 is ambiguous. Meaning, after reading the bill, I don’t know what I can or can’t do as an instructor. If the bill becomes law, because of the ambiguous language, I could break the law unintentionally. The consequences of breaking the law, even if done unintentionally, are dire. As such, I would be second guessing every action I take in the classroom, which means students would not learn. To reiterate, I am respectfully against SB 18.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ray Errol Whitlow, Jr.

Todd Moye
self / history professor
FORT WORTH, TX

I am only representing myself with these comments, but in doing so I am drawing on my roughly 20 years' experience as a history professor at public universities in Texas. My current title is University Distinguished Teaching Professor of History at UNT.
I urge you to vote against SB 18, a patently ill-considered and self-defeating measure that would radically diminish our universities. There is nothing conservative about the massive changes to the higher education system that this bill would put into motion. These changes would be reactionary and extreme.
Tenure is not a guarantee of a lifetime job, but rather an assurance that a faculty member will receive due process when decisions about her or his employment status are made. In practice over the past several decades, it has discouraged administrators and regents from firing professors because they disagree with the professors' politics. This protection has been especially meaningful in Texas since the 1940s and '50s, when rightwing legislators and their allies went after professors for their support of the New Deal and alleged communist affinities during the Red Scare and the University of Texas became a national laughingstock. It took years for UT to recover from that episode.
The passage of SB 18 could only lead to a brain drain. Many of Texas' best professors and graduating students would inevitably leave the state for jobs that offer the guarantees of free speech and tenure that every other state save Florida provides as an afterthought. Your committee could hardly do a bigger favor to California's universities than to pass this bill.
The legislature is already doing damage to our public universities by considering this bill, SB 16, and SB 17. Please see "Statehouses' Targeting of Diversity and Tenure Is Starting to Scare Away Faculty Job Candidates," in The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 5, 2023 (https://www.chronicle.com/article/statehouses-targeting-of-diversity-and-tenure-is-starting-to-scare-away-faculty-job-candidates). I urge you to halt its progress in this committee so that we can all work together toward our common goal of developing world-class public universities. Our students deserve nothing less.
Thank you for your consideration.

Crystal Craig
Swlf
San Antonio, TX

If you take away tenure, you'll suffocate the quality of candidates we can hire who will go for other tenure positions. This is so short sighted

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Penny Bradshaw, N/A
Self
The Woodlands, TX

To all Committee Members:

I ask that you vote NO on SB 18.

This bill is nothing more than an effort to eliminate academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas on college and university campuses. This is not only a threat to higher education in Texas, but also a threat to a democratic society.

By ending tenure for teachers/professors in our public institutions of higher education, Texas will be unable to attract top level teaching talent, the result of which will be a loss of students who might otherwise have enrolled in Texas colleges/universities.

Regards,

Penny Bradshaw

Gavin Johnson
Self
Garland, TX

I STRONGLY OPPOSE SB18 and similar bills to limit freedom of speech, academic freedom, and the search for knowledge in our institutions of higher education. Tenure ensures research is protected from political influence that may limit innovations in knowledge and learning. Tenure is also one of the few benefits for the underpaid and overworked who keep Texas colleges and universities at the top of national rankings and help students have successful careers and be productive citizens. Without tenure, Texas will lose the most talented teachers and researchers in the state.

SB-18 should be fully rejected, and, instead, more investment in our colleges and universities for the good of Texas should be considered.

Aaron Boquet
Self
Garland, TX

I OPPOSE SB18 and any attempts to remove tenure and academic freedom from faculty at Texas colleges and universities.

Tenure is not a "job for life" but a protection from undue retaliation for their research. All workers deserve systems that protect them from being fired without reason.

Cecily Parks
self (occupation: professor)
Austin, TX

My name is Cecily Parks, and I’m writing to you as a private citizen speaking for myself. I’m also an Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing at Texas State University. I oppose SB 18.

My great-great-grandfather came to Texas as a teenager from a dirt-floor cabin in Georgia, worked on crews that built slaughterhouses in Fort Worth, and settled in Northside. My grandfather and father were born in Texas. I attended a private university in Texas, where an English professor assured me that my degree could get me a job at Goldman Sachs. The message was: you’re supposed to leave Texas. But I wanted to stay. After I became the first person in my family to earn a PhD, I returned to Texas to teach at a public university, bringing my husband and twin one-year-old daughters, because I believed I could model for my students what it means to live an intellectual and creative life in Texas. The promise of tenure told me that Texas wanted me to have an intellectual and creative life here.

You have heard how tenure protects academic freedom and abolishing it will convey to my colleagues and future colleagues that Texas does not want their labor here. I would like to point out that the value of earning tenure has meant, for me, the opportunity to direct the Katherine Anne Porter Literary Center, which is the childhood home of Katherine Anne Porter, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and dedicated a National Literary Landmark by Laura Bush in 2002. This administrative work of directing programming at the Center, which is a Texas State University facility, takes up the time that someone without tenure or its possibility would need to dedicate to research, writing, and looking for jobs elsewhere. In my current role, I’m able to celebrate Texas’s literary history, present, and future. I’m able to invite local and nationally recognized writers to give readings that are free and open to the public. There are very few places where people can talk about literature and creative writing, let alone spend time with the authors whose work they’ve read. Tenure has allowed me to uphold one of these spaces, in the home where Katherine Anne Porter spent her childhood, in the state that my family’s stories tell me is a place they made a home in, because the state valued their labor. Please value mine.

Please vote no on SB18.

Reid Echols, Dr.
Temple College
Austin, TX

Members of the Committee:

I am writing to strongly oppose the passage of SB 18, which seeks to alter the tenure system for faculty at public colleges in Texas. As a professor at a public community college myself, I am concerned that the proposed changes would significantly undermine the educational mission of our institutions, and that the most recent version of the bill offers no meaningful addition or improvement to existing policies already in place.

Tenure is a critical component of academic freedom, which is essential for the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Without robust tenure protections, faculty members may be hesitant to engage in research that challenges conventional wisdom or that may be controversial. This would be a loss not only for the academic community but also for society as a whole, which relies on colleges and universities to produce new knowledge and informed citizens. As a graduate of UT Austin's PhD program, I believe strongly that faculty's ability to produce cutting edge (and often boundary-pushing) work is a vital component of maintaining the state's competitive edge and economic progress.

Moreover, tenure is crucial for protecting classroom instruction. Faculty members who have job security are better able to take risks and try new teaching methodologies, which can lead to more effective instruction. The proposed changes to tenure would put this important work at risk, particularly for Community College faculty like myself who serve some of the most vulnerable populations in our state, and work frequently to employ evidence-based practices to improve learning outcomes (sometimes with initial resistance from other faculty or administrators).

Furthermore, the current version of the bill is a solution searching for a problem. The provisions of the bill, including post-tenure review, are already in place in the UT System and mirror Texas A&M's tenure policy. There is no evidence to suggest that these policies are not working as intended.

I am also concerned that the bill may change for the worse if passed out of committee as a result of the committee reconciliation process. This could lead to unintended consequences that would further erode the tenure protections that are so important for faculty members and for the educational mission of our institutions.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose SB 18 and to support robust tenure protections for faculty at public community colleges in Texas. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Reid Echols, Ph.D.

Clay Spinuzzi, Dr.
self; professor
Austin, TX

I write as a private citizen to urge you to oppose SB 18, which eliminates tenure in Texas public universities. Turning this bill into law would eviscerate Texas research universities, and would make it impossible to maintain the University of Texas as "a University of the first class" as required in Sec. 10 of the Texas Constitution.

Professors across the country tend to be paid less by their universities than they could receive from private employers. But part of their compensation is tenure: they can earn a job for life, and that means that they can vary their pace, take time to develop the foundations of a research program, and generate careful work, without worrying about whether they are hitting rigid, short-term productivity deadlines. The benefits of this approach are enormous-- and especially at the University of Texas, they have been realized. UT's professors are enormously productive, including Nobel Prize, Pulitzer Prize, and Turing Prize winners. UT is ranked among the best public universities in the world.

But removing tenure will imperil that ranking and UT's ability to remain a university of the first class. We will have a hard time attracting the best professors -- and I'm not just talking about critical theorists, I'm talking about physicists, engineers, management scholars, and biomedical researchers, all of whom benefit from tenure, and all of whom will receive offers from universities that still have tenure. (Even the free-enterprise Civitas Institute is going to have trouble hiring high-profile scholars without tenure.) We will have an even harder time keeping our untenured faculty, who UT has recruited from across the country and the world, and who have worked incredibly hard to earn something UT will no longer be able to offer them. Finally, we will lose even tenured faculty, who want to work at a university of the first class and who will see that goal as being unsustainable at UT. Many of these faculty are internationally known and the best will find it the easiest to move to new institutions.

I believe that abolishing tenure will be a disaster for UT and for other public research universities in Texas. That disaster will have broad repercussions -- not just in the people educated in Texas universities, but also in cities like Austin, whose tech sector was built around cutting-edge university research.

For these reasons, I hope you will oppose the abolition of tenure in Texas.

ivis Garcia
Self
College Station, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to S.B. No. A18, a bill relating to tenure and employment status at public institutions of higher education in this state.

I strongly believe that tenure is an essential component of any institution of higher learning because of the following reasons:

Loss of federal grants: Tenured or tenure track faculty are given priority for grants, in most occasions this is required of principal investigators. Our system on the long run will loose funding.

Loss of national program accreditation which require tenure faculty need to run programs: Without tenure, the institution may not be able to achieve and maintain national accreditation. This could make it harder for graduates to gain access to desirable job opportunities.

Loss of talented faculty: Without the security of tenure, professors may be less likely to commit to staying at an institution for the long-term. This could result in a revolving door of short-term faculty appointments, which could lead to a lack of continuity and decreased faculty quality over time.

Impossible to recruit new professors: Without the assurance of job security, it may be difficult for an institution to recruit new professors, as well as to retain current professors.

Loss of prestige in the long run: Without the assurance of tenure, institutions may struggle to attract top faculty, which could cause a decrease in the school’s reputation. This could make it harder for students to get accepted into prestigious universities, as well as for graduates to gain access to desirable job opportunities.

Lower morale: Without the assurance of job security, faculty morale may suffer. This could lead to a decrease in productivity and creativity, as well as an increase in faculty turnover.

Loss of students: With few or no tenured faculty, students may be less likely to attend the institution due to a lack of expert guidance and mentorship. This could lead to a decrease in enrollment, which could in turn lead to a decrease in revenue.

Loss of national awards: Without tenure, faculty may be less likely to receive prestigious awards, leading to a decrease in recognition for the institution, its faculty, students, and alumni.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to oppose S.B. No. A18. Tenure is essential for faculty job security, the quality of education, future funding, and the prestige of the institution.

Abigail Beck
self
Dallas, TX

I am against SB 18 to remove tenure. Tenure is an important element of the higher education system and if it was to be removed our world-renowned universities would be directly impacted and lose their international prestige. I received my BS in Civil Engineering from The University of Texas at Austin and currently pursue a doctorate in civil engineering. I have aspirations to become a university professor. I love my home state and want to contribute to educating future generations of Texas engineers. However, if tenure is removed, I would strongly think twice about returning. Tenure is important to preserve academic freedom and the pursuit of new cutting-edge research. This is the only way we can try/pursue new ideas that may end up helping the greater world. Halt SB 18 to preserve the great universities of Texas.

Henry Stuckey
self, student
Austin, TX

SB 18 has removed the attempt to destroy tenure in previous versions of this bill. I would like to remind the authors of this bill of the value of robust tenure protections to ensure that faculty have academic freedom as well as the time to complete long-term projects that may require several years before results are published. The current version does not mention academic freedom at all. I would also like to remind them about the importance of tenure for protecting classroom instruction. I would like to note that the current version of the bill, which mirrors Texas A&M's tenure policy (https://policies.tamus.edu/12-01.pdf) and post-tenure review policy (https://rules-saps.tamu.edu/PDFs/12.06.99.M0.01.pdf) and includes many provisions already in place in the UT System such as post-tenure review, is a solution searching for a problem. The bill could well change for the worse upon moving out of committee, eroding all the gains of the current bill. Other problems include Sec. 3c's provision only includes a "faculty member's regular annual salary" in their "property interest" means that if a faculty member is found to be performing in an unsatisfactory way, they cannot expect due process to protect any other aspect of their job. We continue to seek legal advice on this matter. The definition of "professional incompetence" in sec. 3c2Ai is unclear, and it is also unclear who will determine such incompetence. Sec. 3c2Avii is especially worrisome as it allows for dismissal of a tenured faculty who has "engaged in unprofessional conduct that adversely affects the institution…" This is likely a sanitized way to target "activist" faculty who engage in protected speech outside of the university who are deemed to do reputational harm to the university. This also could be used against faculty who challenge their institution's policies or procedures. For these reasons, and many more, this bill needs to be much more carefully written than it is now, and to remain in committee.

Barbara Bullock
self - teacher
AUSTIN, TX

I am a private citizen, writing to express my personal viewpoint. I oppose SB18. I am a tenured Full Professor at the University of Texas and, before that, I was a tenured Full Professor at Penn State University. Throughout my career, my colleagues and I have received yearly performance evaluations from the Executive Committee and the Chair of my Department. Every 6 years following tenure, we receive formal reviews that acts as a check to make sure that we meet the expectations for research, teaching, and service to the university and our field that are expected of a tenured professor. I have been tenured for a quarter of a century, at different institutions. I am over 60 and I have never encountered a tenured professor of my generation or younger who is not an active, productive scholar and conscientious teacher. We are so short of tenure-track faculty at the university that we are doing our own work and that of several others who haven't been replaced. There is no need for SB18. Chipping away at the tenure process now, or in the future, would potentially imperil the academic freedom that the tenure system was designed to protect. And without academic freedom, there is no protection from political, corporate, or private interference into our research programs.

Stacey Sowards, Dr.
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX

First, I'm writing on behalf of myself as a private individual, to oppose SB 18. I am also a tenured professor at The University of Texas at Austin in the field of communication studies.

From a general perspective, tenure and the ability of institutions to review faculty for tenure (as well as the annual review and periodic review processes we already participate in) is extremely valuable for providing freedom of all kinds of expression, ranging from liberal to conservative ideas and values. Tenure means that the most liberal and the most conservative faculty members are protected from censure and can pursue the kind of research that fields have determined to be necessary, without fear of persecution. Tenure also affords faculty members the time to deeply investigate research ideas and projects over time and place. Researchers can work in remote areas to better understand weather patterns and impacts on communities here in Texas. A colleague of mine is working to better understand Texas community responses to floods and messaging on flooding, the type of project that is long term and involves teams of researchers. Without tenure, faculty members might not be able to engage in such work.

In my own experience, I have found tenure valuable in allowing me the time to complete a long term project on Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers. While I have written many journal articles and book chapters, I completed my archival research work and subsequent book because tenure gave me the opportunity to develop a long term research agenda, rather than completing short term projects. In other words, tenure enhances our abilities to do meaningful research work with real world implications. Without tenure, faculty members would mostly engage in short projects. And, without tenure, UT Austin and other public universities in Texas will not be competitive for the best researchers on the job market. Faculty WILL NOT come to Texas public institutions without the possibility of earning tenure. I know I wouldn't have come to UT Austin three years ago, if this bill had been passed then. I am not a native Texan, but I have lived longer in Texas than anywhere else. I am committed to this state and my daughter's education (who is a Texan). We would like to stay in Texas long term, but we won't if bills like SB 18 are passed.

Scott Aaronson
Self
Austin, TX

I'm a professor of computer science at UT Austin, specializing in quantum computing. I am however writing this statement strictly in my capacity as a private citizen and Texas resident, not in my professional capacity.

Like the supporters of SB 18, I too see leftist ideological indoctrination on college campuses as a serious problem. It's something that I and many other moderates and classical liberals in academia have been pushing back on for years.

But my purpose in this comment is to explain why eliminating tenure at UT Austin and Texas A&M is NOT the solution — indeed, it would be the equivalent of treating a tumor by murdering the patient.

I've seen firsthand how already, just the *threat* that SB 18 might pass has seriously hampered our ability to recruit the best scientists and engineers to become faculty at UT Austin. If this bill were actually to pass, I expect that the impact on our recruiting would be total and catastrophic. It would effectively mean the end of UT Austin as one of the top public universities in the country. Hundreds of scientists who were lured to Texas by UT's excellence, including me and my wife, would start looking for jobs elsewhere — even those whose own tenure was "grandfathered in." They'd leave en masse for California and Massachusetts and anywhere else they could continue the lives they'd planned.

The reality is this: the sorts of scientists and engineers we're talking about could typically make vastly higher incomes, in the high six figures or even seven figures, by working in private industry or forming their own startups. Yet they choose to accept much lower salaries to spend their careers in academia. Why? Because of the promise of a certain way of life: one where they can speak freely as scholars and individuals without worrying about how it will affect their employment. Tenure is a central part of that promise. Remove it, and the value proposition collapses.

In some sense, the state of Texas (like nearly every other state) actually gets a bargain through tenure. It couldn't possibly afford to retain top-caliber scientists and engineers — working on medical breakthroughs, revolutionary advances in AI, and all the other stuff — if it DIDN'T offer tenure.

For this reason, I hope that even conservatives in the Texas House will see that we have a common interest here, in ensuring SB 18 never even makes it out of committee — for the sake of the future of innovation in Texas. I'm open to other possible responses to the problem of political indoctrination on campus.

Hilary Toma
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I urge the members of the committee to vote NO on SB 18, because the loss of tenured faculty is a big loss for the state of Texas.

Andrew Martin, Professor
Self, Professor
Lubbock, TX

I oppose SB18 because I consider tenure to be essential for the effective functioning of a university. In my experience as a full professor at an R1 institution here in Texas, tenure for faculty members is the only secure protection we have for academic freedom in our colleges and universities. Tenure is not a “job for life.” It’s an earned commitment to the faculty who undergo a rigorous six-year probationary period, during which faculty work must achieve a high standard of excellence and demonstrate commitment to professionalism and the core university mission of advancing knowledge and educating students. Once awarded, a comprehensive review is required every six years thereafter. Tenured appointments are indefinite but can be terminated if adequate cause is found after a process that includes an adjudicative hearing before an elected faculty body.

Anyone who is concerned about “indoctrination” in higher education should be an ardent supporter of tenure, as it provides critical protection for teachers and researchers to challenge orthodoxies and create new knowledge, ensuring that it will not be subordinated to the ideologies or whims of those with power. It also ensures that researchers and teachers have sufficient time to develop long-term projects and curricula without fear of losing their employment. As the American Association of University Professors affirmed in the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which has been endorsed by more than 250 national scholarly and educational associations, "institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.”

Without tenure, we will not preserve intellectual diversity and attract faculty and students willing to think innovatively, conduct ground-breaking work, and become leaders in their fields. I am certain that Texas will lose its considerable standing in higher education and position of leadership in research, which have immeasurable economic, intellectual, and cultural benefits and have taken a century and a half to build. I speak for myself as a private citizen, and am not representing a group or organization. Thank you for the opportunity comment on proposed legislation affecting education in our state.

Megan Raby, Dr.
self, professor
Austin, TX

My name is Megan Raby. I am speaking for myself as a private citizen and Texas resident. I’m testifying against SB18.

I am a tenured associate professor of history at UT-Austin, where I have taught for nine years. I take pride in serving Texas’s students, but if SB18 passes, I will seek a job elsewhere. Tenure is an essential safeguard for academic freedom in teaching, research, and expression. As the American Historical Association has stated in its recent letter opposing this bill “Tenure was instituted nearly a century ago, not as a sinecure but to guarantee the academic freedom necessary to assure integrity and innovation in both research and teaching.” Without the protections of tenure, faculty would be vulnerable to political interference and would have little incentive to pursue innovative and intellectually daring research, or long-term research requiring many years of persistent work without immediate short-term rewards. The passage of SB18 would not only stymy the quality and productivity of Texas’s university faculty, it would do irreparable damage to our reputation. A few weeks ago, I was an invited speaker at Yale. Numerous colleagues there made it clear that even the possibility of this bill passing was already harming UT’s reputation. Indeed, they pointed out what quality scholar would want to take a job at UT without assurance of this fundamental protection? UT cannot remain a “university of the first class” without tenure and full academic freedom.

Even if SB18 passes in its modified form, it opens the door to further erosion of academic freedom, and thus still harms our reputation. UT-Austin already has rigorous processes for assessing faculty. Tenure is no guarantee for a new hire on the tenure track; the requirements for tenure are extremely demanding. Indeed, few other professions have such rigorous and frequent reviews, annually and every six years. Interference with our already robust tenure process risks degrading UT’s prestige and national rankings—and above all, the high quality of research and education our students and citizens should expect. I urge you to vote no on SB18 to prevent further damage to the reputation of our public universities.

Dinah Hannaford
University of Houston
Austin, TX

SB 18 is a terrible bill that willfully misunderstands the value and importance of tenure. Tenure allows for creative, innovative research that pushes the boundaries of traditional scholarship. Without the protection of tenure, the best scholars will not come to Texas to teach students. They will go to other states. The best and brightest students will follow them. Millions upon millions of federal and industry research funds will go elsewhere. This is a destructive and harmful bill.

Susan Anderson, Dr.
Texas UU Justice Ministry
Benbrook, TX

The latest draft of this bill mirrors Texas A&M's tenure and post-tenure policies and includes many provisions already in place in the UT System such as post-tenure review. Therefore, the bill in its current form is not necessary. However, I am concerned that if it gets voted out of committee, it will later be changed in the reconciliation process in a way that threatens tenure. Without tenure protections, Texas universities will have difficulty recruiting and retaining the most talented faculty for our esteemed institutions of higher education. Furthermore, our best and brightest faculty will be likely to leave for other institutions that provide more robust tenure protections. Indeed, some have already left and others are contemplating it. Even with recent revisions, this bill still contains vague language which may be intended to create a chilling effect on faculty's willingness to engage in protected speech or challenge their institution's policies or procedures. Vague language is shown in the phrases "professional incompetence" and "unprofessional conduct that adversely affects the institution." What are the criteria and who will decide these matters? Lastly, the bill does not provide due process for faculty dismissal. Legislators should be aware that the chilling effect caused by this bill will impact faculty across the political spectrum, from conservative to progressive. As a professor at a private university and a parent of a student at a public university in Texas, this is of great concern to me.

Ravi Prakash, Dr.
self
Dallas, TX

Please accept this testimony against SB 18. While I am a professor at the University of Texas at Dallas, I am not speaking on behalf of the university. The following are my personal views.

On receiving tenure, I worked to solve an important and tough theoretical problem in the field of wireless networking, with funding from the National Science Foundation. It was much harder than I anticipated. After three years of intense effort, I had to give up. The security of continued employment enabled me to embark on such a high-risk project. Though I failed then, tenure enabled me to switch to another problem which was initially funded by the Department of Defense, and subsequently by the NSF through a Major Research Infrastructure grant. Several colleagues, across various disciplines, also took similar risks, and succeeded beyond expectations. In the absence of tenure, with annual renewal of employment contracts, most of us would have avoided the tough problems with uncertain rewards, focused on relatively simpler ones, and made small and incremental advances in the field.

Tenure, with the intellectual risk taking it encourages, is like the startup model. Texas taxpayers, who pay professors' salaries, are the venture capitalists, and tenured professors are the intellectual entrepreneurs whose work they fund. Intellectual capital generated through university research gets transferred to students who take classes taught by professors. Texan universities are known and respected worldwide due to the wise investment Texas taxpayers have made in the research of tenured professors. This research has resulted in a significant inflow of smart students and tuition dollars from all over the world into our state's universities. Most likely the University of Texas at Dallas contributes more to the economy of the DFW-metroplex and the state than the Dallas Cowboys.

Please do not limit tenure to STEM fields. As a computer networking researcher, I have seen the Internet disrupt old ways of doing things. While it has created several high-paying jobs for the highly educated, it has also taken away jobs from millions of people who, in the past, did not need higher education to be gainfully employed. Advancements in data analytics and in machine learning have the potential to be even more disruptive for our society.

University students, and citizens at large, need to grapple with the ethical and moral questions that modern technology poses. Who better to guide us through this ethical thicket than the humanists and social scientists who have spent their lifetime (thanks to tenure) thinking, studying and writing about such complex social issues? Future Texans need to be educated in all fields of arts and sciences by the best scholars in the world. Tenure is a great way to attract such scholars to Texas. If we abolish tenure, we will not only be unable to attract world-class talent to our universities, we will also lose them to universities in other states and abroad.

Christopher Avila
self
Seagoville, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 18. As a concerned citizen, an alumni of the University of Texas at Arlington and an LCSW-S in Texas, I believe these bills will negatively impact the quality of education for social workers and the overall academic freedom in our state.

This bill will endanger the ability of Texas colleges and universities to facilitate meaningful learning environments that equip social work students with the academic, social, and emotional skills needed to navigate the social work profession after higher education. This bill will silence the unique perspectives brought to classrooms by the wide array of perspectives that live within the state of Texas and erase any acknowledgment of social realities that affect all those who benefit from social work services. Suppressing our diversities and multicultural perspectives through extreme oversight of policies and hiring will severely disadvantage the educational institutions of Texas.

Since Texas universities are world-renowned for their innovations in all disciplines, the oversight and expulsion of DEI will harm everyone in the state across multiple occupational fields, especially those in the mental health and social service professions, and jeopardize the cutting-edge research that makes our state’s education so prestigious.

I urge you to vote against this bill and to support policies that protect academic freedom and truth in higher education. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

ROBERT TALLY
self
San Marcos, TX

To the distinguished Members of the Committee,

I write to express my opposition to SB 18. The attempts to abolish tenure would have devastating effects on the entire state of Texas, with ramifications extending far beyond higher education or particular public universities. In the 21st century, colleges and universities are integral to the social and economic organization of the state more generally. It is not merely that universities (and university-adjacent businesses) employ many millions of Texans, and in some communities -- like my own, in San Marcos -- the local university represents by far the largest employer, but that the reputation of such institutions ensures continued growth, economic diversity, cultural development, and technological advancement. Texas is a state of 30 million people, yet it has only two public universities listed in U.S. News and World Report's Top 100. Attracting, retaining, and promoting faculty success is thus crucial to general good of the state. Tenure, which is recognized in all states and in other countries as essential to the workings of research and teaching in institutions of higher education, must be preserved, and indeed extended to a wider swath of educators, if Texas is to compete in the world today. In fact, Texas should be leading this fight to promote and extend tenure, rather than debasing its constituents by racing to the bottom of the educational barrel.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that, while "tenure" offers a level of protection against arbitrary dismissal, it never provided a scintilla of protection for those not doing their jobs, doing them poorly, or abusing their positions in any way. Such abusers ought to be and are removed, and in Texas all teachers/professor are subject to annual review in order to see that they are doing their jobs. Those who have tenure are reviewed along with everyone else, and if found to be lacking, they are subject to "post-tenure review," at which point they must shape up or be shipped out. This is just to say, "tenure" does not equal "guaranteed lifetime employment," and it certainly never served as cover for people abusing their positions or not doing their jobs.

In sum, tenure lies at the core of the higher-educational project, and it is necessary for the continuing development and improvement of Texan colleges and universities. The very idea of removing it has already had detrimental effects on the reputation and standing of not only Texan universities but Texans themselves, who are unfairly tainted as being anti-learning. If anything, the economic well-being of a state in the 21st century is more closely tied to that state's institutions of higher education than ever before, and the strength of these institutions depends on bills like SB 18 not being passed. Please do not let Texas fall into intellectual and commercial darkness by passing such legislation. Thank you.

Robert Tally, San Marcos

Jessica Velasco
Self--faculty member
Alpine, TX

I do NOT support SB 18. It is based on a gross misunderstanding of what tenure is, how it works, and what it was designed to protect.

Tenure is NOT guaranteeing a job for life. It is guaranteeing due process to tenured faculty members before they can be removed after they have dedicated almost a decade to gain the credentials necessary to teach at a university plus years of service to the university to gain tenure.

Tenure is NOT freedom from evaluation and accountability. Faculty members at most institutions undergo annual evaluations of teaching, research, and service. In addition, we are evaluated in each class each semester by the students. These student evaluations are publicly available on our institution's HB2504 website.

Tenure is NOT freedom to say and do WHATEVER one pleases in the classroom. What one teaches and discusses in class should be related to the topic of the course. For example, while a political science professor may regularly discuss political items, it does not make sense for a math or theater teacher to be doing so—unless the political item is somehow related to the topic of the course (and that is possible). However, a faculty member should NOT be fearful that he/she could be fired for including information or theories or books in the teaching of a course that an administrator does not agree with. We should be trusted to teach the courses in the best way possible based on our years of dedicated work and education in the discipline. In other words, we should be provided academic freedom.

Tenure IS a process by which faculty members evaluate other faculty members after a probationary period to determine whether a faculty member has established that he/she can positively contribute in teaching, research, and service.

Tenure IS a mechanism that provides faculty the ability to finish long-term research projects without fear of termination.

Tenure IS a way that universities keep faculty members. This benefits everyone. Faculty members that stay and establish strong programs at universities draw students to the university and the state. They also create opportunities for students that would not exist with temporary/adjunct faculty or a revolving door of faculty members.

I am SHOCKED and greatly saddened that this bill is still progressing in the Texas Legislature.

Please stand up for the students, the dedicated faculty of this state's public institutions, and the future of the state of Texas --and stop this bill from progressing out of committee, where it can be amended again and put on the path to passage. There are many other actual problems that the Texas Legislature should be focused on in the remaining days of this session.

In the meantime, I will be updating my CV.

Jerry Ruiz
Self
San Marcos, TX

I write to express my concerns about SB 18. Simply put, the bill would gut the state schools which Texas is so proud of: UT, Texas A and M, Texas Tech, U of Houston, and Texas State, where I teach, among others. Students would doubtless be impacted by this, and their ability to access a quality education for an affordable tuition would be sacrificed. Eliminating tenure would cause these institutions to be at a major disadvantage in retaining quality faculty, and hurt the student experience immensely.

Most professors take great pride in their work, and continue finding ways to provide quality, relevant teaching to their students far beyond their being tenured. Several faculty I've worked with continue being amongst the best teachers in the department despite having secured tenure long ago. These professors have been a guiding light to many students and junior faculty. Their sterling records show that most tenured faculty continue working hard for their students and institutions.

There exist ways to evaluate tenured faculty and continue to hold them accountable. These safeguards allow their peers and supervisors to give them feedback if their performance declines. Meanwhile, tenure stands as an important way to ensure their freedom of speech, on either side of the political spectrum. The academy should be a place where there is room to discuss, debate and explore ideas. Tenure helps make this possible.

Most professors are hard-working, middle class, tax paying citizens striving to give their students a quality experience. Our lives are not fancy, glamorous, or elitist. Most of us care a great deal about the young people we teach, and tenure is a hard earned benefit and protection for those of who work hard and succeed in our fields.

Best,
Jerry Ruiz
Assistant Professor
Texas State University

Kerry Sinanan, Dr
Representing myself/Professor
San Antonio, TX

My name is Dr Kerry Sinanan and I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Texas, at San Antonio. I write here as a private person and not to oppose SB18 in my public role. The robust maintenance of the current tenure process within the UT system is essential to protecting its status as a global leader in higher education and research. In November 2022, the UT Board of Regents voted to adopt the Chicago Statement on Free Speech, stating, “The Board of Regents’ adoption of the Chicago Statement on Free Speech underscores The University of Texas System’s long-standing commitment to freedom of speech and expression on our campuses in a manner that promotes open inquiry, provides transparency and upholds the rule of law. We will always value and embrace the debate of competing ideas and principles”. Tenure preserves, protects and ensures this academic freedom as it guarantees Professors, instructors, and internationally recognized researchers, that they can work free from political influence, and free from fear of retaliation for their professional endeavors. Tenure ensures the security and freedom to pursue knowledge, to undertake new directions in research and, in itself, the tenure system intensively assesses and reviews the outputs and activities of UT professors in annual merit and review exercises. It is not possible to receive and maintain tenure without producing work of the highest standards, work that is regularly peer-reviewed and checked already. It is this link between tenure and academic freedom that is vital to the reputation of the UT system globally and to its huge contributions to the Texas economy and wider society in all its forms. Texas currently enjoys a thriving economy: a culture of robust research and higher education is a significant part of this as well-educated graduates participate in every part of the Texas economy. Companies need to know that their graduate employees are learning at the cutting edge of disciplines: they simply will not be able to hire graduates whose courses and programs are deemed to be curtailed and influenced by political or partisan interest. Texas must therefore send a strong message that it trusts professional educators and gives them the academic freedom, underpinned by tenure to deliver world-class education and to undertake internationally regarded research. Thank you.

Marisa Knox, Dr.
Self, professor
Edinburg, TX

I am very concerned about the detrimental effect this bill would have on the higher education system in Texas, leading to a "brain drain" in the state. Sec. 3c2Avii allows for dismissal of tenured faculty on terms that limit the free speech of academics if they are unfavorable to the administration, and could easily be used to target people for political reasons instead of actual unprofessional behavior. Furthermore, even though the bill has been amended to be less drastic in committee (and indeed, conforming to post-tenure policies already in place, it is gratuitous), it could be further altered during reconciliation to attack academic tenure so that no reputable scholar will want to work in a state where they are afforded no protections for academic freedom in conducting their research.

Travis Weiland
Self University facutly
Houston, TX

As a faculty member on the tenure track this bill of passed will impact me significantly. Tenure is no easy thing to earn and can be taken away in cases of negligence. Tenure protects academic freedom which is at the core of innovation and research. I can say with certainty that if this bill passes it will leave to faculty leaving and will significantly impact the stature of Texas's institutions of higher education. I myself am already consider leaving and with me would take 1.5 million dollars in grant funding that helps fund school teachers and doctoral students. This state will loose many of the faculty that currently drive innovation and bring business to Texas. This bill will additionally make Texas the only state in the US without tenure. Universities in this state will struggle to recruit talented new faculty and researchers if this bill goes into effect. Please consider how devastating this bill will be for institutions of higher education in this state and vote against it

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Audrey Taylor, Dr.
Self/Professor
EAGLE PASS, TX

Tenure is an integral part of the academic system of the United States. The tenure system allows for thorough vetting of candidates before tenure is granted, with several years of close supervision and guidance before it is granted. Taking the choice to grant that away, to any degree, from universities in Texas will severely disadvantage Texas as an employer, as a generator of research, and as an educated populace. Other countries that do not have tenure have been used as justification for tenure being removed here. However, it must be noted that most advanced companies (for example, England, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, etc.) all hire with the expectation of permanent employment. Tenure is not granted because it is assumed. In fact, there is even less recourse to be made, in these countries, once a hire is made, than in the current system. The second most important point is that tenure is not a guarantee of employment, or the assurance that someone "can't be fired". It simply means that due process, standard in other industries, must be followed and appropriate justifications made for firing someone. Tenure, or not, should be left up to the individual institutions, not something that the government decides for them.

Sylvia Coulson
Self
Waxahachie, TX

I support this bill

Teresa Klein, Dr.
self/professor of psychology
Corpus Christi, TX

I write in opposition to SB18 because it is a solution in search of a problem. I ask that you vote against it. Tenure in America is a strength of higher education and many Texas colleges and universities currently have strong systems of tenure. I have been a tenured faculty member at a community college in Texas since 2011. The process of earning tenure is a multi-year process that cannot be earned in a matter of months. I am at a teaching college with no research component required for earning tenure but, instead, focuses on strong teaching. Since starting at my college, I've taught every subject we offer in multiple modalities. I believe I am a good professor. Since earning tenure, I have not "retired in place." Instead, I increased my contributions to the college and community through my leadership roles both inside and outside the college, my publications and presentations, and my service inside and outside the college. Most faculty increase their output as they progress through their career. Tenure allows me to be more creative in my teaching and to risk trying new teaching techniques and new topics without fear that I will be reprimanded for trying something new. Tenure is a way to ensure quality education.

Research shows that students may get better grades with non-tenured professors, but they learn more (as shown on assessments) with tenured professors. Untenured professors often give in to the complaints of students without need and inflate grades to ensure their classes fill. Sadly, students sometimes take advantage of this. I've seen students file complaints merely because they wanted a higher grade despite not earning one. Some students attempt to bully their way to an undeservedly high grade. As a tenured professor, I am confident in my abilities to call out academic dishonesty and to uphold academic standards. As we face new challenges from AI technology, we need to be able to address these issues rather than have our students program their Chatbot to write their papers for them. I'm not sure if I would have been confident enough to do this when I was untenured.

The new language proposed for SB18 is less damaging but still unnecessary. Post tenure review already exists. Tenured professors can already lose their jobs for various reasons, but tenure provides them with due process. Weakening tenure weakens the ability of faculty to call out wrongdoing at their institution. I've worked with faculty across the state and being able to speak truth to power within our institutions not only saves taxpayer dollars, it helps students to succeed.

Finally, as someone who has graded too many papers lately, if you do pass this bill, please amend line 11 on p. 4 to read "and/or." Not all faculty perform all the roles mentioned in this section (e.g., community college professors do not typically have a research component to their jobs and engineers do not typically have patients). Please vote against SB18.

Joseph Velasco
self, Associate Professor of Communication
Alpine, TX

I am speaking for myself as a private citizen, and testifying firmly against Senate Bill 18. I serve as the immediate past-president of the largest state-wide federation of public university faculty governance leaders in the nation – the Texas Council of Faculty Senates. I am also an Associate Professor of Communication at Sul Ross State University, awarded tenure in 2015.

In any debate I engage, I find that seeking understanding is the best approach. One of the best methods of seeking understanding, I find, is to begin with defining our terms. When the topic of tenure in higher education arises in everyday talk, people often understand tenure to mean a job for life. That is not the case. Through my training as a member of the AAUP, I learned that, in all practical senses, tenure is nothing more than a guarantee of due process. Yes, tenured faculty can be fired. In Texas, if a tenured professor is to be fired, they must be given due process which involves being presented with evidence against them and afforded an opportunity to defend themselves. That’s it. Due process is a very thin shield, but it does allow significant protection.

Many arguments in favor of protecting tenure will point to tenure’s vital role in protecting academic freedom: the freedom to create educational environments and pursue research free from outside coercion. Such arguments are right, but they are not enough for audiences who don’t value freedom of expression in the classroom nor acknowledge the risk associated with guiding difficult conversations on potentially heated topics in an effort to bring multiple voices and views together in a way that models democracy at its best. To be sure, topic-avoidance will do little to strengthen the thinking of our students as we usher them toward adulthood and becoming engaged citizens no matter their political stripes. Seeing how tenure is the thin shield that provides for daring and thought-provoking conversations and insulates daring and insightful research matters little for some Texans, sadly.

Here's a different take. TENURE IS VITAL TO NATIONAL SECURITY.

That’s right. Based on a recent FBI report, The White House (2021) Fact Sheet identifies domestic terrorism as the top threat to the homeland. In the (June 2021) National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, two strategies directly implicate the needs for research on domestic terrorism (i.e., Strategic Goal 1.1) and enhancing prevention such as “implementing or planning evidence based digital programming, including enhancing media literacy and critical thinking skills, as a mechanism for strengthening user resilience to disinformation and misinformation online for domestic audiences” (i.e., Strategic Goal 2.1, p. 20). There is no place better in America for consistent and widespread training on information literacy, media literacy, and critical thinking than the college classroom. If you take away tenure, you weaken this effort, and strengthen terrorism.

Kelly Bezio, Dr.
self
CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

My name is Kelly Bezio, and I am commenting today as a private citizen. I am writing to oppose SB 18. I have been a researcher in higher education for twenty years, and ten of those years have been in Texas. I received tenure from a regional state university in 2020, and I know from experience that the protection tenure provides ensures faculty can complete innovative research in service of the betterment of society. For example, there are efforts where I live in South Texas to grow its economy by making the region more attractive to visitors and residents alike. Essential to this endeavor is bolstering our creative economy. I am leading a multi-disciplinary team of researchers to work on this question, and our project was funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. By bringing together artists, cultural studies experts, tourism experts, marketing experts, and geographic information systems (GIS) experts as well as city partners in charge of arts and cultural initiatives, our research team is using data to create interactive maps, which will help our region understand how to invest in the arts to bolster its economy. Without tenure and its protection of academic freedom, I am confident such research would not be possible. It would be too risky to pursue collaboration across areas of expertise, which tend to have very different areas of concern.

Because tenure establishes the value of academic freedom and the university's responsibility to create new knowledge, such collaborations are encouraged–especially by tenured faculty. I recently spoke with a chair in the College of Business, who works with some of the faculty on my research team. He emphasized how important these kinds of multidisciplinary collaborations are for tenure-track faculty in his department. He pointed out that how we create new knowledge today derives its significance from the contributions it can make to our communities and to other fields. Academic freedom allows faculty to explore how their research can contribute to practical applications and the betterment of society. Therefore, SB 18 missed the point when it presumes tenure is about matters of employment or providing workplace evaluations of an employee. Indeed, I undergo annual evaluation by my supervisor like any worker. Tenure is about ensuring that we, as a society, have the intellectual resources to tackle the biggest problems facing humanity.

Mariela Nunez-Janes, Dr.
Self, Professor
Denton, TX

My name is Mariela Nuñez-Janes and I am a Professor from Denton where I have lived and taught at a public university for 20 years. I am writing to share my opposition to S.B. 18 proposed in the Texas state legislature that may end tenure and curtail professors from the academic freedom needed to teach the full and accurate history of civil rights, the African American and Mexican American Freedom Struggle, the history of violence against Indigenous people, and ongoing racial and LGBTQ+ discrimination in Texas and the United States.
It is important that professors are allowed to have the academic freedom to foster tough conversations about history and current events today because they allow us to make sure that TX universities be at the cutting edge of intellectual innovation while preparing students for the diverse global world we live in. Faculty need to have academic freedom as well as the time to complete long-term projects that may require several years before results are published. The current version does not mention academic freedom at all. Further, the bill includes many provisions already in place in TX universities such as post-tenure review. Tenure is not perfect. I am one of a handful of Latina professors at my institution who has reached the rank of Full Professor. To do so I had to wait 5 years before I could be promoted to Associate Professor and another 5 years to be considered for Full Professor. Both reviews require the accumulation of an extensive record in the areas of research, teaching, and service along with various internal reviewing units (department, college, university) as well as external reviews by scholars from other universities. Despite the many checks and balances in the process I, like many female faculty of color, faced many challenges before and while going up for tenure and promotion. The result is a disparity in the achievement of tenure and promotion by faculty of color like me. However, the solution to this is not eliminating tenure. SB 18 will aggravate the problem of disparity it will not solve them. The solution to instead is to improve the process of tenure and promotion not eliminate tenure. Universities already have mechanisms to do this. One mechanism is making sure that faculty of color are supported, which is being attacked by bills that target DEI programs. The other process has to do with improving the guidelines for tenure and promotion and this is done at the department and college levels. I have been involved in both in my career with success. Tenure is needed so that tenured faculty of color like me can rely on the stability of tenure and the academic freedom it ensures to improve it and conduct research and teach about our cutting-edge intellectual ideas without the interference of politics and punitive consequences.
For all these reasons, I strongly urge you to oppose S.B. 18
Sincerely,
Mariela Nuñez-Janes

Kathy Ponce
Self
Maypearl, TX

I support this bill. Pass it out of Committee and get the Committee report to Calendars ASAP so it can go to a Floor Vote.

James Klein
Texas Association of College Teachers
Corpus Christi, TX

The Texas Association of College Teachers (TACT) remains opposed to SB 18, though we are heartened that portions of the original language have been amended. Our concerns pertain to language that states that only the governing board shall grant tenure. Mention is made of recommendation by the chief executive officer in this process. Long established national standards of higher education call for faculty involvement in the decision to grant an individual tenure as the faculty's judgement is central to educational policy and faculty in a particular subject area possess the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues.

TACT also is concerned that this bill's detailed language makes no mention of faculty involvement in the dismissal hearing of a faculty member. Here, again, national standards jointly crafted by professional associations representing college and university administrators, governing boards, and faculty clearly state that faculty should be involved as their judgement is central to educational policy and faculty possess subject specific expertise necessary to adequately evaluate the work of their colleagues.

TACT is concerned that the detailed language in this bill defines a faculty member's property interest as their annual salary, excluding mention of accrued retirement, sick leave and other benefits.

Lastly, we are concerned that, among the bill's language directing governing boards' justifications for dismissal of a tenured faculty member is the phrase "...engaged in unprofessional conduct that adversely affects the institution or the faculty member's performance of duties or meeting of responsibilities...." This language is sufficiently vague that it might well invite abuse by individuals with whom the faculty member under consideration has a personal disagreement unrelated to their professional responsibilities.

TACT wishes to reiterate its support for a system of tenure as the surest means of protecting academic freedom so that truth might be pursued in the classroom, in the archives, and in the lab. Adoption of the system of tenure in the mid-twentieth century allowed United States' colleges and universities to supplant Germany's institutions as the epitome of world higher education when the latter allowed sharp infringements upon academic freedom to devastate the learning process.

Ira Dworkin, Dr.
self/professor
Bryan, TX

My name is Ira Dworkin, I live in Bryan, TX (House District 14, represented by Rep. Raney), and I am writing to express my opposition to SB18, and the elimination of tenure. (I am a tenured faculty member at Texas A&M, and I am writing as a private citizen.)

First, I want to correct the current version of the law which defines “tenure” as the “entitlement” to continuing employment. This is incorrect. Faculty are granted tenure after a rigorous evaluation process by their department, college, external experts, and the Board of Regents. In addition, prior to and after tenure, all faculty undergo an annual performance evaluation, by their supervisors and a departmental committee, and by their students every semester. SB 18 provides more administrative requirements for perceived problems (for which there is minimal evidence beyond selective anecdotes) that are extraordinarily rare and able to be addressed without big government. Tenure is a process which ensures the quality of instruction at Texas universities, while supporting academic freedom and long-term research projects which would be difficult to undertake, and importantly, fund for at-will employees.

Tenure is the gold standard in higher education, and the international reputation of higher education in Texas depends on its continued protection. Passing this bill out of committee will subject it to amendment that will endanger the entire system of education in the state.

Tenure is the means through which institutions of higher education encourage innovation and promote creativity by providing faculty, nearly all of whom could command significantly higher salaries in the private sector, with academic freedom, which allows researchers to undertake long-term projects, including those that may challenge existing orthodoxy, with confidence and creativity. Those challenges are the path for progress in a free society.

Alejandra Elenes
self
San Antonio, TX

Tenure is a standard practice for university professors; it is granted after six year of rigorous evaluation of teaching, research, and service by external experts as well as the department and institution. It is not a “job for life,” in that tenured professors’ teaching, research, and service are regularly evaluated by their peers and campus administrators. Tenured faculty may be terminated for reasons such as a financial emergency or for just cause due to criminal behavior. Tenured faculty take on the teaching, research, and administrative leadership roles critical to the continuing strength of universities. Tenure exists to protect academic freedom and creativity. A university without tenure denies its students access to cutting-edge research and contact with leading researchers and teachers who have the freedom to take academic risks. Without protection to share with their students such knowledge faculty will be disempowered to keep Texas students up to pace with their peers at private institutions and public institutions in other states across the country. Understanding that tenure is a key foundation for intellectual risk-taking, researchers, particularly in grant-supported fields, will choose employment at institutions with better intellectual protection. Without tenure, the undertaking of controversial research exposes individual researchers to ideological discrimination. The absence of tenure also heightens the impact of other existing discrimination, like race, gender, creed, sexual orientation, and so forth. Such complex phenomena are worthy of intellectual attention and clear-eyed research.

Felicity Muth
Self, assistant professor
Austin, TX

I am writing as a private citizen. Science is progressed through the ability to take risks, which are really only afforded once professors know they have job security. Without a doubt, abolishing tenure will hurt UT’s leading role as a top institution for science and technology.

Vanessa Camacho
Self, Professor
El Paso, TX

My name is Vanessa Camacho and, as a private citizen, I am here to oppose SB. 18. I am a tenured faculty member, and serving in this capacity at an esteemed Texas institution of higher ed. is an incredible privilege. As a Texan and a first-generation college graduate, I was thrilled when I was offered a tenure-track position. I was eager to and am still enthusiastic to teach students who have similar backgrounds as me and prepare them to be contributing citizens of the world and to share the possibilities of their potential continues to be a privilege. Eliminating tenure and/or academic freedom will undermine quality instruction and learning. Tenured faculty provide a stability to an institution that benefits students as they pursue their programs and career goals. Tenured faculty are invested in their institution and invested in student success. One of the best parts of my job is mentoring students and seeing them complete their programs. This bill will deter both quality academics and students from seeking positions at Texas colleges. Furthermore, tenure allows faculty to produce solid research, to engage in innovative teaching, and to participate in shared governance, which strengthens the prestige and prominence of the tenure-granting institution. Revoking tenure or academic freedom will diminish the prestige of such institutions, making them less appealing to potential faculty and to potential students. I encourage you to continue supporting distinguished higher education in Texas by voting NO to SB 18. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Skylar Rolf, Dr.
Self, Assistant Professor of Management (tenure-track) at a public university in Texas
Missouri City, TX

Dear Members of the Higher Education Committee,

I am representing myself as a private individual...As a 3rd year tenure-track Assistant Professor of Management at the University of Houston - Clear Lake, I urge you to vote against this revised version of SB 18. This revised version serves to preserve tenure in name; however, it removes much of the protections that the current tenure system provides.

I believe that preserving the current tenure system is crucial to retaining and attracting high quality faculty. Without the protections that a traditional tenure system has in place, the public universities in Texas will be at a severe disadvantage in attracting new talent and will likely have difficulty retaining many tenure-track faculty members. As an individual that had never previously lived in Texas and was a tenure-track Assistant Professor at a Top 50 Undergraduate Business Program in another state, I only considered positions that were traditional tenure track positions when I was on the job market several years ago. If a strong tenure system in Texas is removed or severely weakened, candidates in similar positions will be unlikely to choose to move to a Texas institution. In order to keep our public universities strong, the tenure system needs to be retained. Please vote against SB 18.

Regards,

Skylar Rolf, Ph.D.

Cindy Fountain, Ms
Self, Retail Merchandising
Cleburne, TX

I oppose this bill. This bill has not been clearly thought out and creates paths that could easily end a qualified and well-respected faculty member's job. This bill needs to be tabled because it does not serve the best interests of our students, and it puts Texas in danger of not keeping and recruiting good faculty members. Thank you.

Shuxing Zhang
Myself
Pearland, TX

I am opposing SB 18. Tenure is critical for Texas high education as it guarantees academic freedom and empowers researchers to challenge orthodoxies. Tenure encourages boldness and rigor: it invites researchers to be bold in their hypotheses, and rigorous in their testing of these hypotheses. It also ensures that researchers have sufficient time to pursue complicated research problems without fear of losing their employment. A university without tenure is a university that actively discourages intellectual risks. Withdrawing from the structures necessary for pursuing knowledge, an institution without tenure is a factory for indoctrination. Researchers committed to pursuing and perfecting knowledge will seek alternative places of employment. Intellectuals who seek support for rigorous research will move to places where their labor is valued. Understanding that tenure is a key foundation for intellectual risk-taking, researchers, particularly in grant-supported fields, will choose employment at institutions with better intellectual protection. Major foundations, like the National Science Foundation, will direct their funding elsewhere. Thought leaders will seek other homes for their innovations. Without tenure, institutions like the University of Texas turn their backs on a commitment to being the starting point for what “changes the world.” Please vote against SB 18. Let's keep the tenure and recruit/retain more top talents in Texas.

Daniel Pineda, Dr.
Self, Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering at UT San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

This bill (*and* its proposed amendments) will damage the reputation of Texas in multiple fields of scientific research, and they have already had a chilling effect on faculty hiring at Texas universities: faculty candidates for Texas universities are now consistently asking about these bills when they are considering their offers from multiple institutions for tenure-track positions, and several recent faculty searches have come up quite short, with candidates ultimately accepting offers in other states. I represent a field of study and research (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering) that has a significant economic impact in Texas, and some very defense-specific sub-fields (hypersonics, space launch, satellite propulsion, sensor development) rely on university researchers to advance technologies which are critical to maintaining U.S. national security interests. I specifically teach Rocket Propulsion alongside other relevant courses for Texas' aerospace industry, and my research program advances developments in laser-based portable sensors and advanced additive manufacturing for energy and aerospace applications.

Within the first three years of my tenure-track position in Texas, I have brought nearly $1 million of federal and nationally-competitive research funding to Texas and I have already personally trained multiple senior Bachelor's or Master's graduates who have entered or have accepted offers to work for Texas-based or Texas-located aerospace companies. These are individuals who would not have received these economic opportunities and would not be contributing to the Texas industry without the training that tenure-track faculty have provided them. As long as states like California—with its significant concentration of the aerospace industry—offer tenure at their well-renowned public institutions (e.g., UCLA), Texas will continue to lose talented researchers and their research programs to those states. While the flagship institutions UT Austin and Texas A&M may be less affected owing to their existing reputations as top universities, public universities across the state (Lubbock, San Angelo, Permian Basin, Galveston, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, The Rio Grande Valley, others) will lose talented research-focused faculty to higher-ranked institutions in other states like California. I left California and chose UT San Antonio among my other tenure-track opportunities because I felt that—together with my tenure-track colleagues—I can make a difference here and train the next generation of Texan scientists and engineers and bolster Texas' competitive edge in aerospace. Without tenure, we simply can't confidently recruit and retain talented faculty candidates who share this vision, and UT San Antonio's recent significant growth and impact over the last ten years will be stunted. I imagine a similar outcome for other public schools across all parts of Texas, with negative impacts on Texans of all political affiliations.

Eric Leake
Self, university professor
Austin, TX

My name is Eric Leake, and I am speaking for myself as a private citizen of Texas. I also am a tenured professor of English at Texas State University. I oppose SB 18.

This year I chaired a search committee for a tenure-track position in the department. The position was developed to support writing initiatives across the university. After an exhaustive review of applicants from across the country, followed by campus visits from the top candidates, we made a job offer that was accepted. Sadly, the candidate who accepted the position later withdrew her application. She cited SB 18 as a key factor in her decision not to join our faculty. The position remains unfilled.

SB 18 would make recruiting top faculty to Texas state universities much more difficult. Indeed, its consideration already is costing us top applicants. Our students, employers, communities, and the larger state of Texas are negatively affected when we cannot recruit and retain the best faculty. In order to recruit the best faculty, and to enable universities to fulfill their public mission, we need to preserve tenure.

Mattan Erez
Self
Rollingwood, TX

Dear Committee Members, I know you care deeply about Texas universities and I urge you to shut down SB18 before it causes even more harm to Texas than it already has. I know for a fact that it has already damaged the reputation of Texas and the quality of research in Texas universities. If any aspect of SB18 moves out of your committee, it will place the future of excellence in Texas in peril. I want you to focus on the simplest practical aspect of tenure protection -- it allows Texas to attract the best talent and ensure our collective future success. The only way to achieve excellence in universities, in both research and education, is to hire and retain the best faculty. We already all know that excellent universities are an engine of the economy and overall success of Texas and are critical to our future. SB18 will bring the opposite of excellence, driving the most talented faculty out of Texas. It ransoms the future of Texas for momentary political glee. The most talented and successful faculty value tenure because they understand how important it is for their work, even if the public does not have a full view of the nuanced tradeoffs associated with tenure. These faculty will likely choose to teach and work at universities and states that value it as well. In fact, some already have chosen to leave Texas because they fear the impact of SB18. Without the strong and full protection of tenure, those who we want most in Texas are going elsewhere. Instead of driving growth and success in Texas, a different state will benefit. Worse, without the ability to hire excellent colleagues, many of our current leading faculty members may leave to other institutions that can hire the best young talent, hastening the decline of Texas. I urge you to not underestimate the impact on recruiting and retention that any erosion in tenure protection will have and the substantial harm this will have on the future economy of Texas. I am testifying myself as an individual and am not representing any group, individual or organization, though I am a tenured Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at UT Austin.

Vincent Tran
self, student
Round Rock, TX

Hello,

This bill should not be passed. Removing tenureship from universities would be detrimental to society as a whole, as well as to the goals of the supporters of this bill. One such goal is the freedom of expression. Plainly put, tenureship defends freedom of speech. For many, the fear of backlash is what keeps people from saying controversial things, even if it helps strengthen discourse in that topic. This is the problem with cancel culture. For instance, imagine if Galileo never published his work on physics out of fear of persecution by the church. Quite fortunately Galileo did publish his work, even without protections of his life. But not many would be willing to take such a risk. Without tenureship, many "Galileos" wouldn't not publish their controversial work out of fear of being fired.

Further, there are economic benefits to retaining tenureship. The security of tenureship provides an incentive for talented researchers to not go into the lucrative jobs market of industry. Without this "carrot" dangling in front of our scientists and engineers, Texas may lose a lot of its ability to create advancements and keep competitive in this world. Further, tenure "locks" down funding for research. It is a disturbing trend of modern education that universities have been increasing administrative spending without a very proportionate increase in research spending. This is what leads to people being so against, so disgusted by modern public education: the corruption, the bloat, the lavishness of the bureaucracy. By locking down funding, we can fight this trend as those same funds won't go to wasteful administration and red tape, but instead to actual functions of an institution of higher education.

I hope y'all make the right decision to keep Texas education freer, competitive, and admirable.

Edoardo Baldini, Dr.
self, assistant professor of physics
Austin, TX

My name is Edoardo Baldini. I am speaking for myself as a private citizen in opposition to SB 18. I am 35 years old, and I work as an Assistant Professor of Physics at UT Austin. My field of expertise is experimental quantum physics. I engineer laser pulses as short as one millionth of a billionth of a second to study and control quantum phenomena in materials that can transform future quantum technology. This crucial research area is attracting huge investments in the public and private sectors in the U.S.

Before joining UT Austin, I spent 4 years as a physicist at MIT. In 2021, I received offers from multiple North American institutions. However, I signed UT's offer because I believed, and still do, that it is the best place to conduct my research. In just 17 months since the start of my tenure-track appointment, I have built a state-of-the-art laboratory that is among the most advanced in the U.S. for quantum science research. In this period, I have brought in more than $2M in grant funding and have $6M in pending federal and private grants. Some of my grants come from the U.S. Army and the Moore Foundation. My work has been published in top journals like Science and Nature Physics. I have also received numerous early-career prizes, including the IBM Award in Condensed Matter Physics and the American Physical Society Award in Laser Science.

In addition to my role as a researcher, I am also an educator. I have taught undergraduate courses to a vast and diverse population of students, most of whom are from Texas. My teaching has consistently received high grades, with an average of ~4.7 out of 5 from ~120 students. Within only 2 semesters, my students nominated me for a faculty appreciation award.

If any version of SB 18 was passed, it would severely impact my activity. My projects in experimental quantum physics are extremely challenging, and the peer-review process in top journals can take years. The current amended version of SB 18 does not guarantee robust tenure protection or ensure academic freedom to faculty like me. If this bill was passed, it would force me to relocate to another state that guarantees more favorable conditions. Like me, many other untenured and tenured professors may leave Texas, leading to cascaded effects on Texan institutions of higher education: advanced research would cease to exist, Texan students would receive a mediocre education, and institutions would sink in rankings.

I chose to start a career in Texas and declined competing offers because I truly value my institution. However, I am deeply concerned about our future, as the current amended bill may still change for the worse if passed out of this Committee. I think that the current bill is a solution searching for a problem, as it includes provisions that are already in place in the policies of many Texan institutions. Please consider the needs of researchers like me and do not pass SB 18 out of this Committee. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Leland Murphy, Mr.
Self; Former UT Austin Student Government President, Student Worker, Student
Canton, TX

Similar to the negative impacts that SB 17 will have, SB 18 will damage our incredible Texas higher education institutions and economy. Currently, we have institutions that bring in world class faculty who do research that changes the world positively. By passing this bill and damaging the tenure process, top faculty will leave our state and prospective faculty won't even consider Texas institutions an option. We need these world class faculty and researchers to allow our great state and state economy to flourish. By passing this bill, we are doing a disservice to Texas everywhere who will feel the effects of our state economic engine slowing down.

Marisol Cortez, Prof.
Self (university instructor)
San Antonio, TX

My name is Marisol Cortez. I am writing to oppose SB 18 as an individual and not on behalf of any organization or institution.

As Professor of Practice in the English Department at the University of Texas San Antonio, I'm what they call FTT, or "fixed tenure track." That means I don't have tenure and am not on the tenure track. I've been hired primarily to teach. That doesn't mean I don't research, write, and publish--but in terms of the university's two-tiered labor system, I am among the almost 70% of faculty nationwide with advanced degrees who are hired on short-term contracts rather than on the tenure-track.

So why do I write to defend tenure and oppose SB18?

I'll leave the pragmatic arguments to my colleagues: arguments about the economic impacts of losing external funding, being unable to recruit and retain top-notch faculty, maintain the prestige and ranking of Texas institutions or provide the time required to take on large-scale, multi-year, collaborative research projects. Those are all important arguments.

But the reason I oppose SB18 is that I believe academic freedom, like other First Amendment rights, is foundational to democratic praxis. For public universities to function as spaces for bringing new knowledge into the world, they must be spaces where we can challenge entrenched ideas and question everything, especially those ideas most taken for granted as "just the way things are." That means public universities must be free of government restrictions on what faculty can research and teach about. Despite its problems as a system of labor relations, tenure exists in part to protect that freedom.

More than that, though, I oppose SB18 because I and many others are keenly aware that this bill is a smokescreen for government restriction not of all knowledge production generally, but of particular fields of inquiry which the state seeks to ban from public universities.

We cannot forget that the original impetus for this bill was the outrage of state officials at UT Austin faculty who passed a resolution defending academic freedom to teach Critical Race Theory. Like those instructors, those of us who teach in fields of study informed by analyses of race, gender, and sexuality—which is to say, most of the humanities and social sciences—know that SB18 is not really about tenure per se. It's about the state seeking to control what can and cannot be taught, encroaching on the authority of academic experts to determine what constitutes excellence in research and teaching, so as to more easily remove faculty who write and teach on topics they oppose ideologically.

This should alarm anyone who values academic freedom. For all these reasons, I urge you to stop this bill in its tracks. It's bad for business, bad for research, but most importantly bad for the practice of critical inquiry—the freedom to teach and to learn—on which real democracy depends.

Rachel Gonzalez-Martin, Dr.
Self
Austin, TX

I am a tenured faculty member at the University of Texas. I am representing myself alone with these comments.

The definition of “professional incompetence” in sec. 3c2Ai is unclear, and it is also unclear who will determine such incompetence.

The university of Texas already has a review process in place for tenured faculty members.

Tenure allows for freedom in classroom instruction for all of us as teachers. We need not and should not agree in our ideas at every moment—for this is the background of competitive learning environments. It will not serve our students as future leaders of this state and this country to have their coursework censored, denying them full exposure to ideas that they know ana agree with and those that they have yet to be exposed to, even if they are unpopular. Tenure allows faculty to play with ideas, nurture curiosity, and expand the boundaries of our students’ understanding of the world and the ideas that constitute it because faculty can speak freely about all manner of social issues, political practices ,or cultural phenomena without fear that new and familiar opinions can cost us our livelihoods . Tenure allows us to speak from our expertise, but also taking into account our values, integrity, and ethics. It’s allows us to teach holistically with an eye toward creative competition. Tenure allows faculty to teach and conduct rigorous and innovative research that we can then use to fuel our students’ inquiries in the classroom—but without tenure we’d be crippled by the trends in political thought that would force us to turn classrooms into places of dogmatic inculcation as oppose to living breathing spaces of critical debate and divergence. This bill cannot leave this committee as modification to it or revisions that may come leave the entire public educational enterprise in Texas at risk of becoming wholly irrelevant in the nation ansa across the globe. We could not compete with our the innovation, even at time risky innovation that emerges from and are made possible by the guaranteed protections of tenure. For our students and the future of Texas leaders, do not let this bill succeed in this form or in any form that it may take.

Sonya Alemán, Dr.
self, Associate Professor
San Antonio, TX

My name is Sonya M. Alemán. I am a tenured professor in the department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio. My testimony today is offered as a private citizen. It addresses SB18, which seeks to intervene in the standards for academic tenure.

UTSA is in its first year as a Research 1 University, a designation that means UTSA has met 10 benchmarks in research activity and expenditures as measured by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The ten indicators take into account research expenditures, research doctorates awarded and number of research staff in Science and Engineering fields.

When I accepted my tenure-track position at UTSA, UTSA positioned itself as committed to cultivating the research productivity, caliber and resources necessary to achieve R1 status. This focus was an important factor in my decision to accept a tenure track position, as I was leaving a flagship R1 university from another state. If any version of SB 18 becomes law, this new prestigious status is both compromised and threatened. UTSA will be subject to a brain drain of the very faculty that made that designation possible, as many will refuse to pursue their research in an environment that no longer relies on their expertise and a well-honed system of tenure and review and instead subjects them to the political whims of their elected officials. Additionally, as has become evident even in this spring’s hiring cycle, faculty will no longer consider UTSA as the type of research institution they want to be a part of. Colleagues in mathematics and cybersecurity have shared that candidates who were offered positions at UTSA this spring declined or deferred these positions because of the threat to academic tenure the Texas legislature was posing.

I urge you to reject any form of this bill that would irrevocably damage all of Texas’ 11 upstanding R1 universities who each face these similar scenarios should this legislation be adopted. Currently, Texas and California each have 11 R1 universities—the top two states in the country—and this standing would certainly be lost without preserving the current academic tenure system as it is.

Rebecca Raphael
self, college professor
Austin, TX

My name is Rebecca Raphael. As a private citizen, I am submitting written testimony in opposition to SB 18. I am a tenured full professor of philosophy and religious studies at Texas State University. During my career, I have worked under non-tenure track, tenure track, and tenured conditions.

Universities can only achieve their knowledge-seeking purpose if their faculties have academic freedom – the freedom to investigate questions we choose, present work to our fellow experts, and teach our fields according to our professional judgment.

It takes time and insulation from pressure for immediate results to generate new knowledge. A scientist friend recently graduated a doctoral student whose studies brought 15 years of the lab's work to fruition in a major new discovery. This kind of thing can't happen if professors come and go with migratory birds.

New results may upset some people. Our society needs at least one place where knowledge-seeking takes precedence over hurt feelings and attempted retaliation. Transmitting knowledge is a challenging task, and if faculty are vulnerable to career-ending pressures enabled by vague legal language, we can't teach what we know.

Even to preserve the works of the past, we need tenure. My main field is ancient Western classics – the Bible, Greek literature, and their contexts. Sometimes students find these works challenging or dislike the professor's expert approach to them. Maybe some people find them passé and no longer appropriate for curricula. Tenure protects the teaching of the classics too. It's just as necessary for these texts as for newer fields.

Competition for tenure-track jobs is national, even international. That means two things. First, faculty who are hired tenure-track and then earn tenure have achieved at a very high level. Second, Texas has to compete with 49 other states and many other countries for the best talent. The Texas legislature does not have the power to prevent other states and countries from offering tenure. Nor does it have the power to make faculty job-seekers achieve less because Texas offers less. The only thing the legislature has the power to do is to ruin the ability of Texas universities to compete for academic talent.

Or not. The best thing the House committee can do to protect academic freedom is to vote No on this bill in committee. The current House revisions appear to abolish tenure for all faculty by removing the property interest (sec. 3c) beyond annual salary. Evidently, this redefines tenure as an annual contract. Further, the committee can't control later changes if the bill exits the committee.

If the committee fails to defend tenure as robustly as it can, it condemns Texas public universities to the margins of American academic life. It robs Texas students of quality faculty who have the security to follow knowledge wherever it leads.

Elviniecka Carrington
self MSW student
Georgetown, TX

Hello, my name is Elviniecka Carrington. I am an MSW student at Prairie View A&M University. I do not agree that SB 17 and 18. Before I was born, I was Black because you could see by looking at my parents that I was Black. Throughout my life, I have been judged because I am Black, not because I am a veteran who served by county, but by the color of my skin. SB 18 takes away my ability to learn from Black professionals who have experienced discrimination and social injustices in a world that does not accept us as individuals, but also a place that does not accept our profession. By passing these bills, you are taking away my support system and growth.

Laura Fonken
University of Texas
Austin, TX

Hello, I am Laura, and I am writing as a private citizen. In my professional life, I am a faculty member at the University of Texas at Austin. I strongly advocate for the preservation of tenure in Texas, as it is vital for the well-being of all Texans.

The University of Texas at Austin is a place of innovation and excellence. I have had the privilege of witnessing this firsthand. I grew up in Austin, and my grandfather was vice-provost of the university. My father and siblings attended UT. Since attaining a faculty position at UT, I have recognized how faculty at UT are innovative and the students are brilliant. From conferences and visits with colleagues, I know this kind of energy is not isolated to UT-Austin but is also found in public universities throughout the state.

I am worried that there is a fundamental misunderstanding regarding tenure that could jeopardize decades of progress in making Texas a place of innovation and excellence. Tenure is essential because it provides faculty with the freedom to express the results of their research and their views. Tenure protects faculty members and ensures that research can be completed effectively, as results dictate. Further, tenure helps faculty earn grants worth millions of dollars, which provides crucial money for research and also brings additional millions of dollars to the university to help pay for jobs and education for Texans.

If tenure is eliminated Texans will be harmed, and so will students. The best faculty candidates will choose to work elsewhere, and current tenured faculty members will have difficulty attracting excellent new faculty and students. Removing tenure will shift Texas from being a state that attracts the brightest students from around the world to a state that loses them to other states.

Tenure has far-reaching benefits, including recruiting top faculty and students to our state and enhancing Texas’ superb state universities. Tenure helps drive research and brings money into our great state. Texan students deserve the best education that can only be ensured if tenure is preserved.

Delaina Bishop
Purple Sage Elementary PTA
Austin, TX

I OPPOSE this bill.

Virginia Raymond
SELF -- I am a lecturer at the University of Texas at San Antonio and a lawyer
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House,

My name is Virginia Marie Raymond and I am speaking only on my own behalf.

I'm a lecturer at UTSA. I do not have tenure, and as I approach my 66th birthday, do not expect to be tenured. Nonetheless, I am writing to oppose any version of SB 18 that would weaken tenure for faculty members at public colleges and universities in this state.

Why?

I am writing because tenure does not only protect the tenured.

Tenure protects higher education itself.

Critical inquiry, new approaches and agendas, and intellectual exploration are as to the humanities as experimentation is to the sciences. We cannot expand knowledge without approaching and going beyond the edges of what we currently know, without dreaming up new, and even sometimes apparently outlandish hypotheses and theories and testing them out.

If faculty members are not protected, if they must work looking over their shoulders constantly, if they must stay within the safe confines of curricula approved years or decades ago, then education becomes a stale and quickly outmoded enterprise.

Fortunately, SB 18 does not call for hanging heretics, but we should remember Galileo's untimely end. He was punished for challenging the orthodox vision of the solar system. Tenure protects today's intellectuals who might risk otherwise economic security, their own well-being and that of their families, if they strayed out of the bounds of whatever is currently believed to be true.

Our public institutions of higher learning in Texas risk a rapid decline. What brilliant young academic would come to this state to begin their career, if they could instead work in a state that offered them tenure.

When I was a teenager, I was taught that security and liberty (or freedom) were opposites; that there was a necessary trade-off. That cliché was obviously false. Tenure is the economic security that facilitates intellectual freedom.

Without tenure, people who are able to go elsewhere will do so. Members, you have the opportunity to destroy the great enterprise of Texas public education that started in 1876 with the establishment of Texas A & M. I urge you not to do so. Vote against SB 18.

Thank you for considering these thoughts,

Virginia Marie Raymond, JD, PhD

Orlando Lara, Mr.
Self, Future Professor
Spring, TX

As a Spring native and constituent of the bill author, I highly oppose SB 18. I do not believe it can be amended. Recent changes to the bill fail to redeem its underlying intent. From it's inception, this bill has been an effort to stifle the political speech of Texas faculty, both in their role as faculty members who are affected by and whose students are affected by Texas policy, and as private citizens who have the right to engage in protected speech without having to fear that they will be fired by their institutions simply for speaking their mind or engaging in political advocacy outside of the institution. Being a professor should not mean that you make a vow of political silence for the rest of your life. Being a professor means that you take part in the intellectual and political discourse related to the most important issues of the day, including the bankruptcy, harm, and misguided intent of bills such as this.

I also want to stress very strongly that in my 30 years of living in Spring and having almost my entire family in Spring, no one has ever come to me and said, hey, I really wish they would abolish tenure. This bill does not come from Spring, Conroe, or the Woodlands. It is a pet project of the Lieutenant Governor who is attempting to stifle the political speech of faculty even when they are acting as private citizens. This bill has no place in the state of Texas. It is an insult to both current and future faculty and will cost Texas severely when it comes to recruiting and retaining future faculty. Even I, a Texas native, will have a hard time convincing myself to stay in Texas, and that, I fear is the true intent of the bill, to discourage faculty who are critical of the political majority in Texas from continuing to teach in the state. This is a bill that is designed to push out faculty, and it has already begun to have that effect with future hires.

If passed in any form, Texas will lose credibility as a state that values academic freedom and free speech. It will continue to present itself to the rest of the country as a fascist, authoritarian state. The intent of the bill is fundamentally flawed. The tenure review process is already challenging and exclusive, and once granted, tenure can already be revoked for serious crimes, and it is continually reviewed. This bill is insulting, redundant, misleading, anti-democratic, and unpopular. It should not be allowed to move forward to the House floor.

Gary Bledsoe
Texas NAACP
Austin, TX

The United States has been an educational beacon in part because of its academic freedom. Academic Freedom permits our professors to do important research and challenge the status quo when necessary. This makes us better. When other nations have sought to replace us in economic achievements they have frequently failed because they cannot compete with our free society where people can think and in our capitalist system be appropriately rewarded for their innovation and creativity. Years ago in Texas I recall us fighting these battles in Gubernatorial primaries, especially in the 1970's. However, the fact that those who wanted to permit politicians to then fire professors were thwarted in their efforts and our institutions of higher education have continue to gain in reputation until recent years since we have seen this resurgence of antagonism towards faculty because people don't like their research. The NAACP recognizes the importance of Academic Freedom and what it means to us and our State and are firmly committed in working to ensure its survival. Professors may be conservative or liberal but they should not have politicians putting boundaries on what they teach or research. There are existing boundaries such as peer reviews and reputations that will control much of the harmful or illicit thought that may be problematic. As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, freedom of speech permits a public analysis of the marketplace of ideas. We hope that the public chooses the best direction holistically for the whole country but we should not pass a law like SB18 which will open season on minority professors. Any minority professor who speaks the prevailing African-American point of view on slavery, Jim Crow, voting rights, hate crimes or other such issues will be subject to termination or elimination. The battle to eliminate DEI and the overtly prejudicial and bigoted approach to passing law on critical race theory make it clear what the design and intent of this bill would look like. We know the history of attempting to continually perpetrate lies on the public. As Dr. Martin Luther King once said, quoting other great thinkers--"Truth Crushed to Earth Shall Rise Again."

If you want Texas to have first rate universities with first class professors you must say no to this Bill. Of course if it passes we will lose a large number of excellent professors who understand the need to have academic freedom. Outstanding professors who are here will leave and great ones we will be recruiting will largely not come. This will end up with there being an even whiter faculty in most Texas universities and many professors who are motivated by political agendas and not scholarship. I hope you can see what this will mean for Texas? If you love Texas we encourage you to vote against SB18.

Gary L. Bledsoe, President
Texas NAACP

Rosa Alcala
self
El Paso, TX

I am writing to you as a private citizen, but my opposition to SB 18 is based on my nearly 20 years of experience as an educator in the UT system. Tenure is at the heart of academic freedom, which we should be very proud of in the U.S. There are many countries that cannot ensure this type of freedom. Why would Texas want to distinguish itself by threatening the freedom to produce cutting-edge scholarship and writing? Another aspect of SB18 that worries me is that institutions might lose the ability to make decisions about tenure (who receives it and who keeps it) in a way that is fair and democratic. Who receives tenure should continue to be decided by each university, as rigorous review systems are already in place at each university, just as rigorous yearly and post-tenure reviews are for both tenured and untenured professors.

Lisa Henry
higher education
Denton, TX

My name is Lisa Henry, and I am a teacher at the University of North Texas. I am writing to share my opposition to S.B. 18 proposed in the Texas state legislature that may end tenure and curtail professors from the academic freedom needed to teach the full and accurate history of civil rights, the African American and Mexican American Freedom Struggle, the history of violence against Indigenous people, and ongoing racial and LGBTQ+ discrimination in Texas and the United States.

It is important that professors are allowed to have the academic freedom to foster tough conversations about history and current events today, free from political pressure. The tenure system is not a benefit as seen by many. The tenure system allows faculty to research and teach free from political pressure.

I strongly urge you to oppose S.B. 18

Sincerely,
Lisa Henry

Bassam Sidiki, Dr.
Self, college professor
Austin, TX

My name is Bassam Sidiki, and I'm writing as a private individual to voice my emphatic opposition to SB 18. I am also an Assistant Professor of English at UT-Austin; I have just finished my first year on the tenure-track at an institution that I have already grown to love and cherish. As an immigrant from Pakistan and naturalized US citizen who worked hard day and night to acquire my bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees with immense debt, receiving a tenure-track offer from one of the best universities in the world was nothing short of a dream come true. I could finally settle down, establish roots, pay back my student loans, and perhaps one day buy a house. Now, that dream is in serious jeopardy. No version of SB18, whether the former or the newly amended one, should pass the House Committee's muster. While the newer version has removed the stipulation for categorically eliminating tenure, it is still an extremely alarming document, the kind that should mortify any freethinking "democracy" worthy of the name. The document makes a travesty and a laughingstock of long-established academic procedure. As my colleagues have vociferously stated, tenure provides faculty members with not only the security to take intellectual risks, but the security of livelihood period, something that has become increasingly rare for academics as our job market has atrophied over the past few decades. SB18 is yet another disappointing episode in that saga of academic precarity. The new version of the bill is at best a litany of vague causes for termination like "professional incompetence," "unprofessional conduct," and "moral turpitude" that may be weaponized against any faculty member who doesn't ideologically toe the line of the bill's sponsors, and at worst it is a veritable Trojan horse that holds within it the potential to completely eliminate tenure, it being the original intention of the bill's sponsors. Furthermore, we already have post-tenure review built into our university systems, making the language of the bill redundant and of no use to anybody. I implore you, members of the House Committee, to nip this assault on academic freedom in the very bud. SB18 is a dangerously slippery slope to the politicization of research and teaching, activities that must remain free of ideological coercion. It is as if I left the theocratic Pakistan of my upbringing to find myself right back there. Professors there, too, are routinely persecuted for their beliefs. Some have even been killed or disappeared by state authorities for so much as recognizing the human rights of religious and ethnic minorities. Ladies and gentlemen of the Committee, will you let the great state of Texas meet a similar fate? Or will you uphold academic freedom, freethinking, and intellectual rigor? You have immense power to save the future of public higher education in Texas and the futures of our extremely bright faculty and students. Please do the right thing.

Kimberly Nixon, Dr.
Self, University Professor of Pharmacology & Toxicology
Austin, TX

Eliminating tenure will ruin state university education in this state if SB18 move forward.

I am a Professor of Pharmacology & Toxicology at a major university in Austin, TX writing in as a private citizen. I was recruited back to my home state in 2018 due to the excellence of my research and training programs, bringing multiple millions of grant dollars to the state. Eliminating tenure will drive folks like me out of the state to places where tenure exists.

Tenure provides the necessary protection for academic freedom, the basic tenet of a university. I have long sense learned not to question what someone chooses to study because you never know where that study will lead. Sometimes the most basic of experiments will turn into the next life saving compound. Our faculty must have the freedom to discovery, create and teach.

Our state research institutions are major economic drivers. Eliminating tenure will eliminate your best faculty as they will leave and no one of quality will come forward to fill these positions. This will have a major downstream impact on the economy.

SBN 18 has already had a significant detrimental impact on hiring this year. No one wants to come to a university where they don’t have protection of tenure. Please reconsider for the health of our state university system.

Diane Dowdey, Dr.
self professor
Crockett, TX

I urge the committee to reject this bill and not pass it out of committee. Passage of this bill will effectively end higher education in the state of Texas. Professional schools such as law schools and medical schools will no longer be able to be accredited. Nursing schools and education schools will no longer be able to obtain the highest levels of accreditation. Faculty will leave the state and replacements will not be found. This bill does not mention academic freedom, which is the hallmark of higher education in America and must be protected to attract and retain quality faculty and students. Academic freedom as protected by tenure is vital to ensure that classroom instruction remains at a high quality that prepares students for the working world they will be entering where the ability to invent and envision as well as examine options will be prized. Tenured faculty are responsible for bringing billions of grant dollars to the state of Texas. Doing away with tenure would eliminate this vital economic element and leave Texas out of the scientific and technical advances this research develops.

Andreas Gerstlauer
Self (Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering, UT Austin)
Austin, TX

I am testifying against SB18. I am a tenured Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering at UT Austin. Speaking for myself as a private citizen, I am concerned about the effects any removal or significant weakening of tenure would have on the Texas economy and civil liberties. While the amended version of the bill in the House retains tenure on paper, it is open to further modifications in the House or Senate, and it still weakens tenure status in ways that are open to interpretation by administrators.

Tenure provides Professors the freedom to study and express controversial views without fear of retaliation and free from external influences. It thus equally protects the free speech of conservative scholars from retaliation by a liberal administration as vice versa. At the same time, Professors are already held to the most rigorous standards in work ethic and in seeking the truth in research and teaching by regular performance reviews and, most importantly, by their peers and thus ultimately the public. This allows universities to fulfill an important and unique role in society and public discourse that would invariably be silenced without tenure.

Removing or weakening tenure will also have a devastating effect on Texas remaining an economic and research powerhouse especially in engineering and technology no matter how much money is allocated. Without tenure as it exists in other places, Texas universities will not be able to hire any top researchers, existing faculty will leave, and universities will slowly lose their status as top-tier research institutions. We have already seen this in the last 2 hiring seasons in our department, most recently just in the last few months, with faculty candidates declining our offers and going elsewhere explicitly just due to comments they have seen about tenure in Texas. As a result of top faculty drain, a gradual decline in the quality of education and workforce development will in turn lead to companies leaving the state and moving to places where the high-quality talent will be. Texas is currently home to some of the best engineering and technology universities and companies in the world, especially in the semiconductor and computing sectors. SB18 puts all of this at risk for little to no benefit.

April Thomas
self (graduate student assistant)
Denton, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB18. As a concerned citizen, a Texas A&M alum, a current master's student at UNT, and a prospective PhD student at TWU, I believe this bill and others like it would negatively impact the quality and credibility of education in our state. Personally, if these bills pass, I worry about my ability to receive a rigorous and comprehensive education in my chosen fields and, therefore, about my future educational and employment prospects. This concern is due in part to potential limitations placed on classroom instruction and research, but mainly because the loss of tenure protections very well may push qualified professors to seek employment in other states. If this happens, this will limit the capacity of universities to maintain competitive four-year graduation rates. Furthermore, the reputation of Texas universities as centers of quality education and research is largely thanks to our top-tier professors and their dedication to scholarly inquiry and exploration. If our current professors leave and new professors are wary of taking their place due to a perceived lack of support and job security, there's a good chance that students, especially graduate students, will follow the professors they want to work with out of state. This could result in brain drain affecting not only Texas universities, but our workforce as well.

I've heard students from across the state express similar concerns about these bills, enough so that some have said they would transfer to out of state universities to ensure they receive the education they are paying for. Whenever I think about students potentially leaving the state in large groups, I can't help worrying about the social and economic impact this might have on the college town where I live. Between the two universities in Denton, students and faculty make up a significant portion of our local population, as well as our voter and consumer bases; for this reason, UNT and TWU play integral roles in the social, political, economic, and infrastructure landscapes in the city. I love living in Denton—in fact, it's one of my favorite places I've ever lived—because the atmosphere and the community are so open and lively. Students, with their energy, their fresh perspectives, and their support for things like small businesses and the local music and art scenes, make essential contributions to that atmosphere. I would like to see my city continue to grow and thrive long into the future, not have the local culture and economy stagnate as a result of legislation that makes students and professors feel like they have no future in Texas. It would be a shame to lose all of that potential energy—and to lose what makes Denton *Denton*—if the students and faculty were to be pushed out by bills such as SB18. For this reason, I urge you to protect the future of Texas universities and cities like Denton by voting NO to SB18.

Patrick Henry Smith
Self, University Professor
Kingsbury, TX

Greetings. My name is Patrick Henry Smith. I am a member of Texas Faculty Association and writing on behalf of myself as a private citizen and resident of Kingsbury, Guadalupe County in opposition to SB 18.

I am a tenured Professor of Bilingual and ESL Education at one of the largest public universities in Texas. My areas of scholarly expertise are biliteracy and applied 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 each of these universities I have served as chair or member of faculty committees charged with recruiting, interviewing, and recommending candidates for faculty positions in my field. I have been privileged to work with faculty colleagues and university administrators to identify the most highly qualified candidates to teach our undergraduate and graduate students and to conduct research that brings funding, knowledge, and prestige to the state of Texas. At each institution where I have worked, the possibility of earning tenure, following the rigorous review of performance, 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 eliminating tenure proposed in SB 18.

Eliminating or restricting tenure would harm Texas universities and our economy. First, job openings for faculty positions will go unfilled or to candidates wither fewer qualifications, because the most qualified candidates will not apply for jobs without the possibility of earning tenure. This will be the case for job openings at the assistant professor rank, meaning that Texas will lose the ability to hire professors with the most recent and up-to-date training and cutting-edge knowledge. Our ability to attract candidates at the associate and full professor ranks will also suffer, and fewer established researchers will apply for jobs at Texas universities. Finally, tenured and untenured faculty alike will begin seeking positions at universities in states that maintain tenure protections. Out-of-state institutions will begin “poaching” the best and the brightest of Texas faculty. If SB 18 is enacted, Texas will experience a “brain drain” in higher education at precisely the same time we are recognizing the need for more research institutions and more college graduates. The Texas economy will suffer because employers in the knowledge economy seek a stable, well-educated workforce. The quality of higher education in Texas will suffer as a result.

If passed, 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,

Simon Lee
Self
Austin, TX

I write as a private citizen to offer testimony and register my strong opposition to SB18, a sinister bill advanced by political opportunists built on spurious claims and manufactured outrage. Such bills are, of course, unsurprising given the current mania for rolling back civil rights and attempting to demonize educators in order to gain clout with fringe extremists. An educated populace, it goes without saying, poses a direct threat to the personal ambitions of those behind the bill. As a resident of the state, I am troubled that such foolish and dangerous efforts are even entertained let alone taken seriously. Of course, the irony is that reviewing bills founded on paranoid fever dreams and right-wing conspiracy theories is, unto itself, a robust argument for the kind of critical thinking taught in universities — the kind that Senator Creighton dreams of eliminating.

SB18 is particularly harmful for reasons that should be obvious to all citizens of the state. Tenure and academic freedom play an intrinsic role in higher education, and the materials taught in college classrooms reflect a range of cultural positions and ideas essential to the development of critical thought. Stripped of their ability to teach as trained experts, educators in Texas would run the risk of undermining their essential function. Such damage, of course, is the true motive of SB18. Senator Creighton's proposal advocates for extremist overreach with the express intent of harming educational practices and restricting access to knowledge — a proposal that stands in direct opposition to the notion of education as a public good. Further, SB18 is built on fallacious claims about certain materials taught in Texas universities. The performative hand-wringing over what some of these figures mistakenly call "Critical Race Theory" is nothing more than invented outrage, designed to attack educational institutions and make educators the targets of unhinged extremists. Christopher Rufo, the far-right troll behind the invented CRT scandal, confessed to its fabrication in a 2021 New Yorker interview. Rufo's fallacious narrative was systematically circulated through right-wing propaganda networks, one of which was recently taken to trial and exposed as an organ of mass disinformation in America. While Rufo is little more than an internet troll, SB18 is an example of the kind of real-world harm that comes when power-hungry and morally-bankrupt political figures are taken seriously. SB18 seeks to undermine universities in Texas in order to hamper access to education and knowledge as a public good. By doing so, Senator Creighton and SB18 seek to limit access to critical thinking to help prevent future bills akin to this one be recognized as the scams that they are.

Mia Markey
self, professor
Austin, TX

The amended version of SB 18 is unnecessary because Texas universities already have rigorous procedures for tenure, promotion, and review of faculty contributions across the career trajectory. All that SB 18 will accomplish is to make Texas less competitive for recruiting and retaining faculty. Twenty years ago, I became a professor at a public university in Texas. Had SB 18 been law at that time, I would have instead chosen to accept one of the competing offers I had from other universities. I am confident that passing SB 18 will discourage new faculty from coming to Texas.

Carolyn Lux
Self/Retired nurse
Fredericksburg, TX

I am in favor of SB 18. Please pass it.

Thank you.

Michelle Montague, Dr
self
Austin, TX

My name is Michelle Montague, and I am speaking for myself as a private individual. I am testifying against SB 18. I am also a tenured professor of philosophy in the philosophy department at the University of Texas at Austin. I was hired with tenure at UT in 2012 and became a full professor in 2020. The offer of tenure was a crucial aspect of my recruitment package; it would have been a far less strong package otherwise. Recruitment and retention of faculty will be seriously debilitated without tenure. Much lower-ranked universities that offer tenure will be competitive with higher-ranked non-tenure granting universities. Without tenure, the University of Texas at Austin will be in danger of sinking in rankings and prestige.

Tenure is necessary to guarantee academic freedom. I regularly teach an Introduction to Philosophy course to undergraduates at UT, which includes topics such as free will, God, abortion, punishment, the death penalty and many others. These are difficult and emotional topics, and it is important for students that professors can speak freely and openly about all sides of these issues. Tenure protects developing new knowledge and new ideas. It is a necessary guarantee for the free flow of information.

UT Austin is a top-ranked university world-wide, and I feel incredibly proud to work there. SB 18 threatens UT's ability to maintain its esteemed standing, and so I ask you to vote against it.

MONTIE SHELTON
none
Huntsville, TX

I support SB 18. We must have a way to break the tenure of Marxists who infiltrate our institutions and indoctrinate young people.

Carolyn Rospierski
Self- Talent Manager (22 years with ExxonMobil)
Cypress, TX

No no no to SB18

As a hiring manager, i analyze benefit packages and manage talent pipelines. it is essential that we have well educated students in this state. In order to do that, our universities must be competitive in their employment offer. Removing tenure and limiting compensation packages will reduce the appeal of Texas universities for the best and most talented teachers, instructors and researchers. UT cannot remain a top 5 university if the employment is shaky and the complete benefits package is limited.

Vote no SB18

Omar Valerio
self
San Antonio, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 18. As a concerned citizen, an engaged voter, and a faculty member of the University of Texas at San Antonio, I believe this bill would negatively impact the quality of education and academic freedom in our state.

This bill will endanger the ability of Texas colleges and universities to facilitate meaningful learning environments that equip students with the academic, social, and emotional skills they need to navigate the world beyond higher education. They would silence the unique perspectives that each of us bring to the classroom and erase any acknowledgment of social realities that affect all students both in and outside of the learning environment.

A university without tenure denies its students access to cutting-edge research and contact with leading researchers. Without protection to share with their students the most advanced knowledge affirmed by a community of researchers, teachers will be disempowered to keep Texas students up to pace with their peers at private institutions and public institutions in other states across the country. A civic population that is not educated by tenured researchers is educationally disadvantaged relative to the rest of the country.

Understanding that tenure is a key foundation for intellectual risk-taking, researchers, particularly in grant-supported fields, will choose employment at institutions with better intellectual protection. Major foundations, like the National Science Foundation, will direct their funding elsewhere. Thought leaders will seek other homes for their innovations. Without tenure, institutions like the University of Texas turn their backs on a commitment to being the starting point for what “changes the world.”

I urge you to vote against this bill and to support policies that protect academic freedom and tenure and truth in higher education. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Omar Valerio
815 Sutters Rim
San Antonio, TX 78258

Kimiko Gordon
Self
Austin, TX

Please vote against this bill SB 18 because it will hurt Texas colleges and universities in their efforts to recruit and retain qualified and talented faculty members in all fields of study. As a parent of a student at The University of Texas Austin, this is very important. This bill would be detrimental for not only my daughter, but for countless other students, families and faculty members. And ultimately, Texas will suffer from the consequences of fewer quality professors who will be willing to be recruited and/or retained at our colleges and universities as a result. Please vote no on SB 18. Thank you

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William Fagelson
self (Assistant Professor of Instruction)
Austin, TX

My name is Bill Fagelson, and I am writing as a private citizen to oppose SB18. I am an Assistant Professor of Instruction in the Cockrell School of Engineering at UT Austin.

Although my position is non-tenure track, so it is easy to say that I am not affected directly by this bill, I can tell you that there will be significant indirect effects to me, our students, our colleges and universities, and thus the state of Texas. In fact, some of those effects are already coming to pass.

Removing tenure, or in this case essentially gutting tenure of meaningful protections, will make it that much harder for Texas schools to be a leader in research and innovation. Tenure protections serve an important role in academic freedom, allowing our researchers to ask difficult questions and pursue unconventional, and maybe even unpopular, lines of thought. If you believe that colleges and universities are hotbeds of liberal though intolerant of conservatism (though that is not true in my experience), then you should value these protections. As a teacher, I know firsthand how this environment inspires and motivates our students and attracts the best graduate students.

Just as important, our institutions will have a difficult time attracting the best researchers without the offer of true tenure protections. Why would a top researcher accept a position without real guarantees that they will not be subject to the whims of a school administration or the State? They will receive plenty of attractive offers from schools that can provide those guarantees. I am not even directly involved in the hiring process for tenure-track positions, but I have already heard anecdotally of more than one potential hire declining an offer in part because of those concerns.

Passage of SB18 is also likely to drive away some of the best we already have. Competitive schools will have a much easier time recruiting from faculty who have been trained and developed by UT (at a significant investment), once they see these protections disappear. This has happened elsewhere, and it will happen here in Texas if SB18 is passed, even in its current form.

Those who will pay for these losses are, first and foremost, our students, who until now have had access to a world-class education as a result of these protections. Our business environment will suffer as well, as researchers take their ideas and innovations elsewhere, partnering with local companies wherever they go rather than those in Texas. In the end, passage of SB18 would be a self-inflicted wound on the State of Texas, something I am urging you to avoid with a vote against this bill.

Amy Anderson, Dr.
Self
Lewisville, TX

Dear committee, I am writing on behalf of myself, a private citizen and new Texas resident. I recently moved my family to Texas last year, after 7 years of advanced training, to accept a position as a tenure-track (TT) assistant professor at UNT. My choice for this position was driven by the UNT's growth as an R1 institution, the intellectual autonomy within the TT position to conduct cutting-edge research, and the chance to build a future for my family in North Texas. Tenure accompanied by the existing annual evaluation procedures facilitates academic freedom necessary for me to conduct community-based research that aims to support the well-being of adolescents and their adult mentors. SB18 will severely impair this ability, reduce the university's ability to secure and support grant funded research, and hinder recruiting of productive researchers from across the country. As a person who was just on the academic market, few if any applicants would consider a job without tenure in contrast to other TT offers elsewhere. SB18 is in stark opposition to Gov. Abbott's goals of making Texas universities nationally recognizable R1 institution. I strongly urge you to reject this bill. Sincerely, Amy

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Marc Sager, Mr.
Self, PhD Candidate
Weatherford, TX

To the esteemed committee, I am writing to express my concerns for SB 18. If this measure is to pass you would be setting back Texas' Public Higher Education Institutes. Both the University of Texas and Texas A&M University are highly ranked and respected across many disciplines, however if this passes ALL of our public institutions would lose the necessary high-quality professors and PhD students needed to ensure success. These respected scholars would take their grant money, students, and research centers to institutes that do not limit their ability to adequately perform their job. If you want Texas to continue to be a leader in Higher Education, I implore you to reconsider this bill.

Roger Davis, Dr.
self - physician psychiatric researcher
Maxwell, TX

I oppose SB 18 in any form.
This bill is redundant to Texas university policies already in place.
The purpose of SB 18 is to codify into law a Brain-Drain Cancel Culture bill.
SB 18 aims to destroy academic freedom.
SB 18 will prevent our Texas universities from recruiting professors to teach our children and grandchildren, who will leave Texas.
My work focuses on improving brain function in people with psychiatric conditions.
My significant other teaches our future teachers of Texas.
My opinions, written here, does not reflect the stance of our employers.
Notably, if SB 18 is passed IN ANY FORM, changes will be made to destroy tenure by the committee later on the House floor through amendments or by a Conference Committee (in reconciling differences in the House and Senate versions).
My significant other works as a professor to teach your children and grandchildren at a college in Texas and in Texas elementary schools.
As is typical in universities, my significant other has been working for a few years before the opportunity for applying for tenure next year.
If that single benefit of teaching our Texas children (granted by an overwhelming majority of other US states) is withdrawn with an amended SB 18, we will BOTH leave Texas for a state that does not seek to harm us.
SB 18 will eliminate not only recruitment of professors to teach your children and grandchildren at any college within Texas, SB 18 will DRAIN Texas of highly valuable professors, elementary schoolteachers, physicians, researchers... the people we all rely on to make Texas great.
I will not share my political views here, because professors and teachers and doctors and researchers of ALL political views will leave Texas or stay away from Texas if SB 18 becomes law.
SB 18 ultimately would dumb down the great state of Texas.
SB 18 also encourages our children to leave the Lone Star state, in search of opportunities where academic freedom is not cancelled/taken away.
I love Texas. I hope to stay in Texas for the rest of my life.
Yet, we can only stay in Texas if we are not punished for doing our jobs.
I believe a majority of children who reach adulthood and are admitted to a Texas college can make their own rationale decisions about how to vote and which voices matter to them, without any need for a bill like Sb 18 that attempts to "cancel" Texans who have earned a doctorate... to make your lives in Texas better.
If you care about your Texan kids and grandkids and hope they don't leave Texas, please vote against the redundant, brain-drain bill SB 18.
Please do not vote against my future.
Please do not vote against your children's future.
Vote No on SB 18.

Erika Bsumek
Self
Austin, TX

I think there is a misperception that once a faculty member earns tenure, they are no longer reviewed by their universit. Even after someone has been printed (earned tenure), they undergo numerous reviews every year. They are evaluated on their productivity, their teaching, and their service at least twice a year (usually once at the department level, once at the college level.) Every six years, they undergo a more intensive review at both levels.

Tenure also helps insure that faculty can conduct research that might take years to ‘pay off’ in terms of the wider contribution to society (longitudinal studies), even as they teach, publish, and serve their institutions on committees or in a myriad of other ways.

Tenure is considered the gold standard for attracting and keeping top talent (especially since it is so difficult to earn). Without it, I fear that the best and the brightest faculty will not want to work at institutions that do not offer it.

I want my son to be taught by instructors on the tenure track — or that have already earned tenure. Peopl who will be around over the course of his college career. People who can introduce him to cutting edge research and ideas. People who have the time and have made the commitment to engage in that research and integrate it into their own teaching.

Please protect tenure at institutions of higher education.

Thank you.

Jolene Ramsey, Dr.
Self - untenured professor
College Station, TX

I am writing as a private citizen who is also a pre-tenure faculty member at Texas A&M University. Last year I was recruited to work here in Texas due to the excellent research and teaching reputation of the university. In the units that I joined, we are among the recognized world leaders in our field. We conduct research that helps provide medicine for the sick people of Texas and the world when antibiotics don't work. If we don't do this research, scientists outside Texas, especially abroad where the standards and motivations are quite different, will forge ahead without us. The incredible mind power currently present here coupled with our state-of-the-art facilities for research are truly top notch. As passionate teachers, we also strive to equip our students to become leaders that follow the Aggie core values and will make a positive impact through service to their state, country, and all humanity. It was my aim to carry out my career here among fantastic colleagues. However, I was also promised upon recruitment that I would be transitioned into a tenure-track position where I would be able to earn the funding to conduct our research and adequately compensate personnel. If the ability to earn a tenured position is removed, then the safety net for us to take the kinds of innovative risks needed to forge our field into new areas where breakthrough medicines will come from is removed. Research progress to save lives will be invariably slowed here in Texas, but not elsewhere. Our reputation in the research community will be tarnished, and already is through rhetoric that does not encourage taking risks in an environment that protects young innovators. I strongly oppose SB 18 and urge you to consider the broader picture of the future of Texas.

Geneva Gano, Dr.
self, Professor of English
San Marcos, TX

My name is Geneva Gano and I am an Associate Professor of English at Texas State University. I am speaking for myself as a private individual and am testifying against SB 16, SB 17, and SB 18. I want to express my concerns about these bills because they directly affect me, my family, my colleagues, and my students, I believe that my voice is an important one to consider as you weigh the value of these bills.

I came to Texas from Ohio in 2015 because I was recruited and hired by Texas State University for my position as a professor of English. This position is very specialized, yet it attracted more than 150 applicants from a national and international pool. When hired, I left a comparable position at a college in Ohio and moved my family of four in order to take the job.

Texas State University, as you know, is an Emerging Research University and the opportunity to further my research in a dynamic, up-and-coming institution with a core group of experienced, talented colleagues was extremely attractive to me, ultimately leading to my decision to come to Texas.

Most institutions in the United States offer tenure. If this institution did not offer tenure, I would not have considered the position at all.

Since joining the faculty at Texas State University, I have found many successes that would not have been possible without the basic stability and consistent support that tenure offers to research faculty. These included receiving the Golden Apple Teaching award for excellence in teaching, having been named the Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones Professor of Southwestern Studies, publishing a scholarly monograph that has been well received in my field as well as many other academic articles, and convening two internationally-attended symposia on the writer Sandra Cisneros.

My undergraduate and graduate students have won numerous scholarships, successfully applied for and entered law school, business school, and graduate school in the humanities and education, and entered the job force as teachers, entrepreneurs, mental health professionals, and more. Many of my students at Texas State University, a Hispanic Serving Instutition, are from historically underserved populations, are veterans, and are first-generation students, meaning that they are the first in their families to attend college. In my role as a professor, I was not simply these students' teacher, I served as a mentor and guide as they forged their career paths. The consistency and long-term support that I provide to my students throughout their college careers and beyond, would be impossible to provide without the stability that tenure offers.

As a professor, I rely on the stability of tenure in order to advancAcademic freedom is key to tenure as well as the basic stability that serves as a foundation for this kind of work.

Thank you for considering my testimony and please reject the anti-innovation, destabilizing bills SB 16, SB 17, and SB 18.

Sincerely,
Geneva M. Gano

James Reeves, Dr.
Self - English Professor
Round Rock, TX

Dear House Higher Education Committee,

I write in opposition to Senate Bill 18, relating to tenure and employment status at the state's public institutions. I am currently a tenure-track professor at Texas State University, where for the past five years I have researched, published, and taught classes on the history of religion and literature. My work documents the ongoing relevance of religion in Europe and the United States, and, often times, my classes provide students with their first significant encounters with religious history. I believe that for students to become ethical citizens and productive members of the state's workforce, it is crucial that they graduate with an awareness of the religious, spiritual traditions that have shaped our society over the past several centuries.

In June 2023, I will begin the lengthy process of submitting my tenure file. If granted tenure, I will have the security to continue teaching and researching such important topics, no matter the political climate or social/cultural forces that would seek to eliminate the teaching of robust religious history at our state's institutions of higher learning. With this in mind, I respectfully ask that you do not move SB 18 beyond the committee level, where the committee's bill may be subject to revisions that compromise the academic freedoms represented by tenure and where the careers of those like me, who have worked for years to achieve tenure, may be put in jeopardy.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Respectfully,
James Reeves

Alex Beasley
Self
Austin, TX

I am an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Austin, but I am writing in my capacity as a private citizen.

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to SB 17. I implore you not to pass this bill through committee, even in a heavily revised form. Any chance that the bill might be revised to threaten tenure, free speech, and liberty in thought would be disastrous to the university system and the state of Texas.

Five years ago, I was offered a job at UT. I had other offers, but I chose to come to UT because of the wealth of resources at the university, the incredible colleagues and students, and my own affiliative ties to Texas. I can say without a doubt that I would never have made that choice without tenure protections. As a parent of young children, I could not have afforded the risk of losing my job if someone in power did not agree with the results of my careful research. That is the real risk that tenure is intended to guard against.

It would be impossible to recruit world-class faculty to Texas without tenure protections, given the reality of tenure at all other competitive institutions in the U.S. A loss of tenure protections would also make the university system ineligible for major funding streams, including some federal funds.

This is not an issue that matters only to faculty. It jeopardizes the students and future workers of the state of Texas. Please, do not let this bill leave committee.

George Anthony Keddie
self, university professor
Austin, TX

My name is Tony (George) Keddie, and I'm speaking for myself as a private individual. I am testifying against SB 18. I am also a tenured associate professor in Religious Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. I received my doctorate at UT after completing one of the world's most rigorous and respected programs, went on to attain tenure at another institution, and then was hired by UT and my tenure was reviewed and confirmed then. Far more than a hard-earned bestowal of job security, tenure is one of the most comprehensive forms of job vetting and review I've ever heard of. It is challenging for tenure-track faculty to publish and present enough research to have a tenure case ready within the university's allotted timeline while also teaching and performing administrative tasks for their departments. For most faculty, it means they're working much longer than 40 hour work weeks (often double that). Then assembling the tenure file takes significant work and the file gets anonymously reviewed by several of the most esteemed leaders in one's field and their letters become part of a file that is vetted by multiple committees within one's department, college, and university. This is no rubber stamp, even for a top scholar. The result is that this tenure process is globally recognized as distinguishing top faculty. In my case, within a year after tenure, I was offered positions on major journal Editorial Boards and opportunities to chair Steering Committee--all that's to say, opportunities to be a leader in the field and direct the next phase of research. Tenure is a necessary guarantee of academic freedom in teaching, research, and writing that enables faculty to produce (and help others produce) the most cutting-edge research that advances fields of knowledge through the incorporation and dialogue around all viewpoints, whether conservative, moderate, liberal, or apolitical. Since it is recognized as so significant on the international stage, it is crucial for top recruitment of students, staff, faculty, and administrators and for keeping graduate programs competitive and for faculty and students being competitive for major research grants. Thank you.

Xiaoqin Li, Dr.
Myself
Austin, TX

Take over higher education is not the answer to winning social debates. Removing tenure will damage public universities in Texas permanently, hurt the state economy and residents in substantial ways.

Tyler Wade
Self, higher education
Dallas, TX

Good Morning Chairman and Representatives,

My name is Tyler Wade and I am testifying against SB 18. Though I am employed in higher education, I am providing this testimony on behalf of myself as a private citizen, and not on behalf of my employer.

Under Texas law, colleges and universities cannot fire a faculty member simply for teaching or expressing opinions on controversial topics. Tenure is an important part of higher education and professors need these protections to foster intellectual independence.

Becoming a tenured faculty member is a difficult process and involves extensive vetting and peer reviews, and to be clear, obtaining tenure does not shield someone from any university oversight.

While the amended version of SB 18 is better, there are a few provisions that are still concerning:

1. Sec. 3 (c)'s provision only includes a "faculty member's regular annual salary" in their "property interest," meaning if a faculty member is found to be performing in an unsatisfactory way, they cannot be expected due process to protect any other aspect of their job.

2. Sec. 3 (c-1) has many provisions which allow dismissal for poorly defined terms, which could be used to target "activist" faculty who engaged in protected speech outside of the university and who are deemed to do reputational harm to the university. These policies could be used against faculty who challenge their institution's policies or procedures. Specifically, "professional incompetence," "moral turpitude," and "unprofessional conduct" need more specific definitions.

This bill is a solution in search of a problem. Much of the language mirrors the existing tenure policies of most public universities in Texas. Tenure is an essential tool to promote academic freedom, allows professors to focus on teaching and long-term research, and protects the freedom of speech.

I strongly encourage you to oppose this legislation.

Sincerely,

Tyler Wade
Dallas

Sherry Eller
Self
Temple, TX

I SUPPORT SB 18. Please quickly pass SB 18 out of committee. Thank you.