To: Texas A&M University System Board of Regents
From: Brian L. Evans, PhD, President, Texas Conference of the American Association of University (AAUP) Professors, aaup.texas@gmail.com
Date: November 11, 2025
Subject: Agenda Item No. 4.2 - Please vote no

I am speaking for myself as a private citizen, and not on behalf of any group, institution, or organization other than Texas AAUP.

The Texas AAUP is firmly opposed to the proposed policy changes in Agenda Item No. 4.2. Please vote no.

Academic Freedom. At the heart of learning and innovation at colleges and universities lies the freedom to explore, question, and express ideas without fear of censorship or retaliation. This academic freedom fuels the exchange of diverse ideas—whether conservative, liberal, moderate, or apolitical. Academic freedom doesn't just empower educators; it transforms students, fostering critical thinking, expert knowledge, civic engagement, and professional connections that shape successful careers. AAUP's academic freedom principles are adopted by all seven Texas public university systems and 85% of all four-year non-profit universities in the US.

Our objections to the proposed policy changes are rooted in our own experience as faculty, as well as long-standing First Amendment case law:

1. The change to policy 08.01 would empower university administrators to censor course content by barring instructors from addressing certain topics, silencing instructors and inhibiting debate and dialogue in classroom discussion.
2. The change to policy 12.0, meanwhile, would allow a university administration to restrict any and all instructors from bringing their expertise and real-world experience into the classroom to enrich course content and make it engaging and practical for students' learning.

Legal Concerns. Per our legal team, these proposed policy changes amount to prior restraint, which as a matter of First Amendment law, automatically bears a "heavy presumption against its constitutional validity." Furthermore, the Supreme Court has ruled that academic freedom is "a special concern of the First Amendment," because safeguarding such freedom is "of transcendent value" to all Americans. Defending these policy changes and their implementations in court would be a costly spectacle that will waste Texas tax dollars.

Harm to Student Learning. These policy changes will enact severe restrictions on freedom of expression and academic freedom, impeding faculty and students from their main mission on campus: to teach, learn, think critically, and create and share new knowledge. Not only would these policy changes codify institutional censorship of curriculum and classroom discussions but also create a climate of fear so potent that instructors are likely to further limit what students learn through self-censorship. This immense detriment to the classroom environment will

affect all courses, and important dimensions of the human experience — gender, sexuality, and race — will be rendered “off limits."

Harm to Reputation. Texas has more top-tier research universities and health institutions than any other state *because* of faculty freedom to teach, question, and discover, and not in spite of it. Academic freedom is central to critical thinking on our higher ed campuses, and vital for all faculty to fuel the exchange of diverse ideas—whether conservative, liberal, moderate, or apolitical. Muzzling student and faculty expression in the classroom will not spur critical thinking-- it will do just the opposite. These policy changes will drive students and professors out of Texas, hurt students, weaken research, and cripple our response to workforce shortages, including in education and healthcare.

Harm to Workforce Development. Our state government is seeking to ensure more adults are degreed or credentialed by the year 2030 as expressed in "Building a Talent Strong Texas". Agenda Item 4.2 directly defies that declared statewide priority because it will prevent students from being prepared about the diverse world and workforce they will be entering. If students cannot learn and faculty cannot teach without fear of government interference, they'll leave the state.