

I am Dr. Steven Pei, a Professor Emeritus at University of Houston. I am writing to voice my objections against SB37.

I grew up in Taiwan and came to U.S. for graduate study in 1971. I was recruited from Bell Laboratories in NJ to Houston in 1994 to lead a NASA project, which was a major payload on three Space Shuttle flights. At the University of Houston, I served as Associate Dean of Engineer for Research and leadership roles at four major research centers sponsored by NASA, DOJ and State of Texas.

In the 80's, I led an AT&T, Hughes Aircraft and Mc Donald Douglass team to transfer a semiconductor technology to a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) pilot production line.

After 9.11, I received millions of dollars of Congressional earmarks and worked with DOJ and DHS to found "Southwest Public Safety Technology Center" (SWTC, <https://www.ece.uh.edu/research/sw-public-safety-tech>) of which I served as the Executive Director. One of the SWTC directors was appointed by the Harris County in 2006 to chair the Houston Ship Channel Security Council, which oversees the \$34 million port security grant to Harris County. I assure you that I fully understand and appreciate the importance of national security.

My researcher and students graduated from the University of Houston started several successful high-tech companies including Applied Optoelectronics Inc. (AOI) in Sugar Land, TX (NASDAQ AAOI, <https://ao-inc.com/>), which went public in 2013. AOI is a major manufacturer of semiconductor lasers and photodiodes and provides high-speed optical fiber data connectivity solutions for cable services, data center, and artificial intelligence (AI) computing centers.

Based on my personal experience in the industry and academic research, I would also like to emphasize the importance of academic freedom to the innovation and creativity, which are critically important for Texas and the U.S. to maintain our competitiveness in high tech.

We want to create a welcoming higher education and research environment in Texas to attract and retain talents from other states and other countries build a strong economy in Texas.

SB37 is going to create such an unfriendly environment and discourage high tech companies from making Texas their home. I strongly encourage you to vote against SB37. Thank you.

Steven Pei, 5319 Dumfries Drive, Houston, TX 77096 (Senator Molly Cook: District 15)

Craig Campbell
78702 - Senator Sarah Eckhardt: District 14
University of Texas at Austin. College of Liberal Arts
Faculty

Texas Senate Bill 37 proposed here is a disingenuous attempt at imposing a radical conservative agenda on the university. Under the cover of 'improvements' they propose a dystopian combination of administrative bloat and doctrinaire constraints on the freedom of faculty and academic units to do their job. In an effort to fire up the electorate a cabal of public 'intellectuals' have fostered a paranoid culture war built on a rejection of science and facts. This in turn feeds a misguided attempt at reforming higher education. Where the manufactured culture war sees enemies there is in actuality an intellectually and politically diverse professoriate engaged in world class research. As a scholar of Soviet Russia, I have seen this ideologically driven lunacy before. The communists, under the thrall of a narrowly ideological project, imposed a vast administrative structure that placed needless constraints on the freedom of scientists and scholars to undertake their work. This resulted in a catastrophic strangle-hold on innovation. It is one of the reasons that the USA has become the global leader in university research. The state of Texas, which heretofore has supported the freedom of scholars to follow their expertise, posed to dismantle this entire project at the whim of conservative culture warriors who would rather spend their time micromanaging experts than actually paying attention to the science and ideas that emanate from the university and that can feed better policy. I find it deeply ironic that the proposed senate bills take a page out of Stalin's playbook to 'purify' the University.

So, I appeal to the vast majority of Texans who are more level-headed than the politicians who've come to believe the moral panic they've manufactured to get elected. The university is a complex ecosystem, do you really want elected officials and bureaucrats meddling with one of the country's great universities?

Andrew Heinrich
Asst. Professor of Drama, ACC
232 W Ridgewood Ct
San Antonio, TX 78212
State Senator Jose Menendez

Greetings,

I write today as a Texas citizen, representing only myself and no other organization or institution, in strong opposition to SB37 and all attendant bills and amendments that seek to curtail the free speech rights of Texas faculty, remove faculty from hiring decisions, and strip from our colleges and universities the shared governance that helps to keep our academic institutions places where we honor the free exchange of ideas.

Any government attack on any American's freedom of expression is an attack on all Americans. The State has no business meddling in the free exchange of ideas in our colleges and universities.

This odious bill would be a direct assault on that sacred space. The Government seeks to force me, through the threat of criminal investigation and constitutionally dubious prosecution, to align the content of my course with a single authoritarian conservative political ideology. The government might punish me for sharing with students the work of great non-white authors like August Wilson and Lynn Nottage. How weak have we become, how thin-skinned have we become, to fear a professor's words so much that the state AG must get involved any time a student gets triggered by their professor?

My Grandfathers both took up arms to fight authoritarianism abroad. They took an oath to the US Constitution. This bill flies in the face of their sacrifice. It flies in the face of the sacrifice of every service member who has ever put on the uniform. An ocean of sacrifice lays before this legislature, and to pass this bill is to dishonor and desecrate that history of sacrifice.

Please, oppose this bill. Please fight in, for the good of the people of Texas, and in the name of the First Amendment.

Sincerely,
Prof. Andrew Heinrich, MFA.

TESTIMONY FOR THE TEXAS STATE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION – OPPOSITION TO SB 37

Emily Berman

Professor of Law
University of Houston Law Center
1737 Hawthorne St.
Houston, Texas 77098
State senator: Sen. Molly Cook, District 15

My name is Emily Berman. I am currently a Professor of Law on the faculty at the University of Houston Law Center. I express here my own personal views, not those of any institution or organization.

Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my views. I write to express significant concerns regarding SB 37, which threatens to undermine the high quality—and therefore the competitiveness—of Texas’ public universities.

This bill would impose excessive oversight on curriculum decisions, limit faculty governance, and create bureaucratic hurdles that will hinder academic innovation. More specifically, by allowing political appointees and external stakeholders, rather than highly qualified faculty, to make decisions regarding course content and faculty hiring, SB 37 risks weakening the academic quality and national standing of our institutions. The best universities in the country thrive on ensuring freedom to teach, to learn, and to research, and this legislation would put Texas at a disadvantage in attracting top faculty and researchers.

As Chair of the University of Houston’s Faculty Appointments Committee from 2021-24, I saw first-hand how the passage of SB17 and SB18 in the last regular legislative session had an immediate—and adverse—impact on faculty recruiting and retention. As currently drafted, SB37 promises to exacerbate this concern by undermining the core elements of successful universities—faculty and students’ freedom to teach, to learn, and to research. By excluding faculty from institutional governance, curriculum development, and hiring decisions, SB37 will deter exceptional candidates from coming to Texas, driving talented faculty to institutions in other states and reducing Texas institutions’ ability to develop the workforce Texas needs to compete in a global economy. Texas has built a reputation for having world-class universities, and we should be working to strengthen them, not weaken them.

Shawntal Z. Brown
TO: Senator Sarah Eckhardt
Austin, TX 78756
Higher education staff member

Testimony in Opposition to Texas Senate Bill 37
Dear Texas House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Shawntal Brown, and I am writing as a private citizen and higher education professional with a decade of experience supporting the tenets of academic freedom and equity in higher education. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 37, which threatens faculty governance, academic freedom, and the ability of Texas institutions to provide students with a high-quality education.

Higher education should be a space where students, faculty, and staff are empowered to engage in rigorous academic inquiry, develop critical thinking skills, and prepare for leadership in a diverse society. **SB 37 undermines these goals by stripping faculty of decision-making authority, imposing excessive state oversight, and granting governing boards disproportionate power over curriculum and hiring.** These changes will not enhance educational excellence but will instead create a climate of fear, instability, and political interference. **This is already happening with the passage of Texas Senate Bill 17, which has driven top faculty and students away from Texas institutions.**

As someone who has both attended and worked at institutions of higher education, I know firsthand the impact that faculty and support services have on student success. When I was a first-generation, Black woman student from a low-income background, I relied on faculty mentorship and institutional resources to navigate higher education. Faculty and support offices are instrumental in helping students succeed but through tailored mentorship and academic guidance. SB 37 threatens these vital relationships by devaluing faculty expertise and diminishing shared governance structures.

Additionally, this bill could negatively impact institutional rankings, recruitment, and federal funding opportunities. Many Texas institutions, including Hispanic-Serving Institutions, receive funding from agencies such as the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health. Weakening faculty governance and imposing unnecessary oversight could jeopardize these resources, ultimately harming Texas's standing in higher education.

I urge you to reject SB 37 and protect the integrity of Texas's colleges and universities. The future of higher education in our state depends on preserving academic freedom, faculty governance, and institutional independence.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,



Shawntal Z. Brown

March 18, 2025

I am writing as a private citizen of the state of Texas to record my strong opposition to SB37. I am deeply concerned that SB37 will do serious and irreparable harm to the universities of Texas. It will cause a loss in the competitiveness of the universities in terms of their ability to attract top professors and administrators, and will ultimately make the universities less capable of serving the needs of their students. Most importantly, SB37 restricts the First Amendment rights of university faculty.

As a current professor at the University of Texas at Austin in the College of Liberal Arts, I have seen firsthand how complex the operations of a major research university are. SB37's aim of outsourcing decision oversight to external committees will mean that people without deep knowledge of university operations will be given final decision-making approval. SB37 will mean that decisions will be slowed down because of this massive increase in bureaucratic complexity. Hiring decisions, for example, need to happen quickly in order to attract the most competitive scholars. The overall quality of the teachers and researchers at the university will fall as more in-demand professors go elsewhere. This drop in quality of the academic staff will mean a drop in teaching quality and capacity to win research grants.

One rationale for SB37 is that Texas universities need to be responsive to the changing conditions that students will encounter upon graduation. However, outsourcing approvals of curriculum to external boards made up of people who are unfamiliar with university pedagogical best practices will only slow down approvals of course offerings, making them by definition less responsive to changing circumstances. Moreover, these external boards will lack the practical, on-the-ground knowledge and expertise that faculty have of how best to create curricular materials that engage and enlighten Texas students.

Finally, the external oversight proposed in SB37 makes no guarantees of the First Amendment rights of faculty to teach on their subject-matter expertise. It is an unconstitutional overreach that goes against basic principles of liberty foundational to the United States and to Texas.

With 1) lower quality faculty 2) who will be teaching courses that have been vetted by boards lacking expertise on either the course topics or pedagogical best practices, and 3) infringements on the First Amendment rights of faculty, Texas students will receive a significantly worse education that makes them less rather than more prepared for successful careers in a wide range of fields if SB37 passes.

Courtney Handman

Austin, TX 78757

Constituent of TX State Senator Sarah Eckhardt

Statement Regarding Texas Senate Bill 37

Andrew Dessler

College Station, TX 77845

Constituent of Representative Paul Dyson and Senator Charles Schwertner

Current Faculty at Texas A&M Univ.

I am writing to express my deep concern about Senate Bill 37, which proposes dramatic changes to the governance structure of Texas public higher education institutions.

American universities are the global gold standard of higher education. Our university system has been the foundation of America's tremendous economic growth and technological leadership for generations. The innovations that power our economy and society—from artificial intelligence to GPS technology to countless medical advances—were developed through our university research systems, where academic freedom and rigorous inquiry are paramount values.

This bill represents an alarming power grab that would undermine the very principles that have made our higher education system successful. By giving politically appointed governing boards authority over curriculum, hiring, and faculty governance, SB37 threatens to make universities espouse the philosophy of whichever party controls appointments. This fundamentally violates the principle of academic freedom that has been essential to American educational excellence.

The restructuring of faculty governance and the creation of politically appointed oversight bodies will severely hamper the ability of our institutions to maintain academic standards, recruit top talent, and foster the innovation that has kept America competitive. Faculty expertise is being marginalized in favor of political oversight in ways that will damage the quality and reputation of Texas higher education.

Meanwhile, as we consider legislation that would undermine one of our greatest competitive advantages, our global rivals stand to benefit. China has invested billions trying to replicate the success of the American university system, recognizing that academic freedom drives innovation. This legislation would hand them a strategic advantage as they strengthen their educational institutions while we impose political constraints on ours. The competition for global talent and innovation is fierce, and SB37 threatens to place Texas universities at a significant disadvantage in this arena.

I strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bill 37 and any legislation that threatens the autonomy and academic freedom of our higher education institutions. The economic future of Texas and America depends on maintaining universities that are free to pursue truth and innovation without political interference.

Respectfully, Andrew Dessler

My name is Becky Villarreal and I've been teaching English at Austin Community College for nearly 30 years. I'm a proud member of the AAUP and ACC-AFT, but today I'm addressing you as a private citizen.

My chief complaint against SB 37 is that it Undermines Democratic Processes.

At Austin Community College, we have four employee groups: the Faculty Senate, Adjunct Faculty Association, Professional Tech Association, and Classified Employees Association. These are democratically elected bodies that serve as communication and coordination channels between the employees and administration, critical to everyday functioning, as well as to crisis response, to ensure that norms of due process and educational liberty are maintained.

At ACC, I've proudly served as both an officer and campus representative for the Adjunct Faculty Association. The administration often calls on our faculty to weigh-in on issues that affect students, employees, and the community, such as: curriculum; student engagement; best practices in distance learning and student advising; and campus safety. Since we are all duly elected, our fellow adjunct faculty members are welcome to attend and be heard at meetings, run for a position as an officer or campus representative, and vote out reps and officers who fail to meet the challenges their positions entail.

At ACC, the Adjunct Faculty Association often coordinates with the Faculty Senate, Student Government, and other employee groups to advise the administration about issues that affect the college and our students. None of the employee groups, including the Faculty Senate, have the authority to remove the Chancellor of the College. When a rare vote of no-confidence is issued, the board of trustees simply considers our action and listens to our concerns.

The four employee organizations, along with Student Government, work with the chancellor and his cabinet, who recognize that the Faculty Senate and Adjunct Faculty Association understand the mindset and academic needs of our students and thus rely on our expertise.

For this reason and more, I encourage you to reject SB 37. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Becky Villarreal

Adjunct Professor of English

Austin Community College

Texas Senator Pete Flores, 78613

March 19, 2025: Testimony on SB 37/ HB 4499

My name is **Caroline Faria**. I give testimony in my capacity as a private citizen and member of the Association of American University Professors. I am faculty at the University of Texas at Austin. I am a constituent of Texas State District 14, my zipcode is **78702**, and my State Senator is Sarah Eckhardt. **I am here to oppose SB 37/ HB 4499.**

I am in my eleventh year teaching at the University of Texas at Austin in the department of Geography and the Environment. I love my job. I am passionate about my research on innovative urban planning from around the world. I am active in conducting service at UT Austin on the graduate assembly and numerous college and university wide awards committees. I was associate director of the Plan II honors program for three years. And I am currently working with staff, faculty and students to prepare for our annual celebration of undergraduate research via our departmental symposium. Lastly, I love my role as a teacher - and the opportunity to work with smart and curious students.

I am very proud to work at UT Austin and I feel deeply committed to my students, colleagues and our institution. One of the things I appreciate most about my role is the **autonomy** I have to exercise my now-twenty years of expertise. I will focus here on my work in service to students. I teach large format introductory courses that serve thousands of students and I teach smaller upper-division and graduate classes, training future experts in my field. I greatly value the **educational liberty** to put my training to work in the classroom: to experiment and fine tune the balance and content of lectures, field trips, invited speakers, exam modalities and learning strategies. Through careful response to weekly student and end of semester evaluations, I ensure that students **get the most for their tuition dollars**. Students receive a rigorous and innovative educational experience that will foster vital lifelong skills in writing, thinking, and learning and ensure their competitiveness for top jobs. And I am effective. My students are excited and engaged in our classrooms, my CIS scores are consistently very high, and I have received numerous college and university wide teaching awards. SB 37 would impose restrictions on what and how I teach that would **fundamentally and negatively impact our students**. It would add layers of bureaucratic management that would take time away from my work with and for students. And it would curtail one of the most important elements of innovation - that is, the **freedom and autonomy I have to teach my students effectively**. I see these controls reflected in elements of the bill that seek to build an expensive, time consuming nanny state for faculty self-administration, self-disciplinary procedures and faculty hiring decisions.

SB 37 undermines the quality of student education. In light of this kind of legislation, we are losing our most promising student and faculty talent. UCLA, Michigan, Oregon, Yale, Berkeley, Princeton and The Ohio State are just some of the institutions my colleagues, promising prospective graduate students, and honors undergraduates have moved to, or chosen over, UT Austin **in just the last year**. There is no doubt that SB 37 is a significant threat to the prestige, reputation and competitive edge of UT Austin and our partner institutions of higher education in the state of Texas. Thank you for your time.

My name is Lauren Gutterman. I am writing to you in my capacity as a private citizen. My zip code is 78704 and my state senator is Sarah Eckhardt. I am currently a faculty member at UT Austin, where I have been employed for the past decade.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB37. This bill would have a disastrous impact on public colleges and universities in Texas by putting control over what faculty teach in the hands of state politicians. The bill proposes to do this in several ways, including by creating a new general education review committee created by each institution's governing board, and by requiring that the governing board of each institution submit a yearly report about decisions made about curriculum to our state political leaders, thus inviting state political interference and control over teaching. In addition, the bill would prohibit core courses from "endors[ing] specific public policies, ideologies, or legislation." Given that the term "ideology" can refer to any set of ideas and beliefs, this prohibition is incredibly vague and could be used to censor teaching about whatever topics the political leaders in power object to at that moment.

As someone who teaching US history courses that partially fulfill the state legislative requirement I am very concerned about the impact this bill could have on my teaching. Could teaching about the history of US immigration law be considered to be promoting an ideology of open immigration? Could teaching about the history of segregation and the civil rights movement in the US be considered to be promoting an "ideology" of racial equality and democracy? Could teaching about the history of the feminist movement be considered to be promoting an "ideology" of sex equity? Could teaching about the existence of LGBTQ people in the American past be considered promoting an "ideology" of gender and sexual non-discrimination? There is no end to the topics that could be censored because political leaders consider them to be ideological in nature.

To take away faculty control over teaching in these ways would be to effectively hollow out the concept of "academic freedom" which, according to the UT System Handbook of Operating Procedures, holds that "faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his or her subject." Faculty members spend decades developing expertise in their fields and reading the most current publications in their discipline to stay up-to-date in their knowledge. We are already evaluated by students and by our colleagues regularly as teachers. Why should administrators and politicians who have no expertise in academic research and no experience in our classrooms be in the position of evaluating our teaching and curriculum?

My department is currently conducting a search for a scholar of American history and culture. Already, one of our top candidates withdrew his application for the position after learning of the impact of the ongoing legislative attacks at UT Austin which began in 2023. SB37 will only degrade the stellar reputations and national competitiveness of our public colleges and universities. By undermining faculty control over teaching SB37 will cause tremendous harm to public higher education in Texas. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to oppose it.

Arnetta Murray

9815 Clifden St/ Iowa Colony, Tx 77583

Rep. Cody Vasut

SB 37- The Take Down of Higher Education

Senate Bill 37 is a sprawling bill that would increase state oversight over hiring, curriculum, faculty governance, and compliance in Texas public colleges and universities. The AAUP chapter at UT Austin opposes SB 37 because it is duplicative, inefficient, and incompatible with the state's need for high quality, competitive teaching and research in its colleges and universities. Specifically, Senate Bill 37:

1. **Adds Unnecessary and Wasteful Bureaucracy.** There are already several layers of oversight at Texas public colleges and universities, culminating in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). An Office of State Excellence within the THECB would duplicate oversight already vested in University and System compliance officers.
2. **Increases Inefficient Government Interference.** University administrators must be given the authority to make decisions regarding their own portfolios. Otherwise, the state will not be able to retain the best talent. Instability at the administrative level makes it difficult or impossible for faculty to complete long-term research projects and academic program-building.
3. **Undermines Student Choice.** Minors and certificates have become increasingly important to students seeking to certify their education in secondary fields. Minors and certificates, even those with limited enrollment, help students achieve the broad skill set necessary for success in the workplace and in life.
4. **Denies Faculty Expertise.** Faculty expertise is essential to effective hiring of new faculty, department chairs, and administrators. The current system of including faculty on hiring committees, with final decisions in the hands of administrators, has worked well, as the high ranking of the state's universities attests..
5. **Undermines Democratic Processes.** Faculty Senates/Councils are democratically elected bodies that serve as communication and coordination channels between faculty and administration. They are critical to everyday functioning as well as to crisis response. Faculty Senates work with the administration to ensure that norms of due process and educational liberty are maintained. Actions of Faculty Senates and hiring committees are already advisory to the President, and many decisions (including on curriculum) must also be approved by the System (in the case of UT, Texas A&M, and Texas State) and the THECB.
6. **Promotes Educational Censorship and Imposes Prior Restraint on Speech.** Policymaking on curriculum should be made by faculty and administrators, who have the necessary expertise in the subject matter. Submitting decisions on core curriculum and academic programs to an office headed by a political appointee is a violation of free speech and academic freedom. Educational liberty is essential to creativity, innovation, and maintaining a system of higher education of the

highest quality. Curricula, including courses in the core curriculum, must not be subjected to an ideological litmus test; that would be indoctrination rather than education.

7. **Divides University Workers.** Requiring less oversight over faculty in STEM fields than in other fields is unwarranted. Faculty in all fields undergo rigorous training, apprenticeship, and regular evaluation. They work closely together on many interdisciplinary projects. They should not be subjected to different degrees of oversight based on their fields of study.
8. **Risks Losing Talent through Micromanagement.** Micromanaging and overregulation is not the path to maintaining high quality education in the state of Texas. Rather, these practices will drive away top researchers, teachers, and administrators.
9. **Sends Universities Into Receivership.** Beyond micromanagement and inefficient interference, making it so that the governing board can overturn *any* decision made by a campus administration would essentially place Texas public colleges and universities into indefinite receivership, with all decision-making left to political appointees. This would adversely affect the quality and competitiveness of Texas higher education.

Name: Jennifer M. Wilks

Zip Code: 78723

State Senator: Sarah Eckhardt

College/Program: The University of Texas at Austin

Position: Faculty

Statement against Senate Bill 37

I write to express my concerns about Senate Bill 37, which is poised to dissolve the institutional and intellectual integrity of Texas public colleges and universities. If these institutions, along with the Legislature, are indeed to be good stewards of taxpayers' money, then they should not be subject to unnecessary and wasteful bureaucracy. An education "of the first class" is one that grants students the freedom to develop the broad skill set necessary for success in the workplace and in life, not one that undermines their curricular choices. Finally, if what starts in Texas is truly to change the world, students educated in our public colleges and universities need to be able to learn about the cultures, histories, and populations that have shaped the world and Texas' place in it.

My name is Alison Kafer, and I am speaking for myself as a private citizen. I am currently a member of the AAUP and a tenured professor at UT Austin. My zip code is 78723 and Senator Sarah Eckhardt is my representative.

I oppose SB 37 for many reasons, but I will focus on its impact on student success and its impact on recruitment, both of which impact UT's reputation and competitiveness.

1. **Student success:** I have been teaching and advising undergraduate students in Texas for twenty years, and the students who have been most successful—graduating on time, making good grades, pursuing advanced degrees and/or finding fulfilling work after graduation—have been those who used their general education requirements (i.e., courses outside their major) to take courses that they were passionate about. SB 37 will restrict students' educational liberty, taking away their ability to pursue courses that spark their curiosity or meet their interests. I know many students who were only able to succeed in their majors because they had the freedom to explore unexpected and esoteric subjects for their general education requirements. Students learn important skills in accountability and personal responsibility when they are allowed to choose courses freely and according to their own interests. Please don't take that educational liberty away from them; SB 37 would do exactly that.
2. **Recruitment of top faculty and students:** I attended an international academic conference in my field last fall, in part to recruit potential graduate students and to encourage colleagues to apply to an open position in my department. Every student I spoke to said that they were not seriously considering UT-Austin because of their concerns about their educational liberty. They were opting to apply instead to schools in states where they felt the curriculum was not at risk of outside interference—where, in other words, faculty were the ones making basic curricular decisions and courses weren't at risk of being cancelled for their content. Potential faculty colleagues said the same thing: UT Austin was not an attractive option because of threats to faculty governance and educational liberty. UT Austin will not be able to maintain its reputation for academic excellence or its competitiveness if it is no longer able to recruit the best students and faculty. SB 37 will only make Texas less attractive to students and faculty, and I urge you to vote it down.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

My name is Mona Mehdy, my zipcode is 78727, my State Senator is Sarah Eckhardt, I am a faculty member at UT Austin. My comments for the Texas Senate K-16 Committee re: SB 37 are as a private citizen, I am not writing on behalf of any institution or group.

Higher education schools widely across the US enable students, faculty, and staff to deliberate and make recommendations for certain matters of policy. Then the administrators through the president make the final decisions. There is oversight at multiple levels including beyond the institution such as by the Texas Coordinating Board. This process is respected for enriching and strengthening higher education.

SB 37 seeks to centralize all decision making with a governing board such as the UT Board of Regents who are appointed by the governor. This will lead to a large and costly duplicative bureaucracy. The governing board will be distant from being knowledgeable about matters at each institution. For example, the needs and competitiveness of a four year college will be different from the needs and competitiveness of a medical school for best supporting their students and research enterprises. The proposed complex and inefficient system will fail to attract and retain talented and motivated administrators with trickle down negative effects for students and our state.

Secondly, the governing board will be given a central role in the curriculum design and content. For students, their education will be impaired and likely lose the benefit of faculty improving their courses, updating their courses as knowledge grows in their field. I urge you to reject SB 37 as a short sighted bill that will harm our Texas schools' competitiveness and our state.

My name is Daniel Morales, I live in Houston Texas in zip code 77098 and am represented by State Senator Molly Cook. I am a professor at the University of Houston Law Center, but I am speaking in my capacity as a private citizen and member of the AAUP. My view are my own and are not authorized by or reflective of the position of the University of Houston.

Senate Bill 37 is an unconstiutional solution in search of a problem. The University of Houston Law Center, along with the Univesity of Houston as a whole, have done the state of Texas proud for decades, judiciously using resources that produce thoughtful and techincally proficient graduates in numerous majors and concentrations from all walks of life who make tremendous economic and social contributions to this state. Where then is the need for this heavy-handed interference in university affairs and faculty autonomy over bodies of knowledge they have devoted their lives to? The provisions of the bill are wide-ranging, but together they paint a false picture of Texas faculty. Where I take care in my courses to honor student views whatever their political valence, and explore difficult and controversial ideas from a variety of perspectives this bill tries to paint me and my colleagues as indoctrinators that need to be supervised by a nanny-state, lest we say the wrong thing.

Not only does the form of supervision you propose to enact clearly violate the First Amendment by vaguely and nebulously barring faculty from “endorsing” particular legislation or “ideology”—would a professor who was teaches constitutional orginalism as correct run afoul of the law?—it also stifles rigrous teaching and discussion—imperiling the project of education itself. This bill turns the classroom into a state-policed safe-space where saying the wrong thing can get you fired. This is exactly what the First Amendment was designed to prevent.

My name is Stephennie Mulder, and I'm speaking for myself as a private individual and as a member of the American Association of University Professors. I am not speaking on behalf of any group, institution, or organization.

SB 37 mandates the creation of an Orwellian "Office of Excellence in Higher Education" to supervise curriculum, hiring, and program size. The bill would impose an extremist conservative viewpoint on higher education in Texas, requiring a reporting system that would create a climate of fear and imperil the freedom of faculty and administrators to do their jobs. It would also create needless bureaucratic waste and inefficiency by duplicating mechanisms of accountability that are already in place like those of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

I have worked for over two decades as an archaeologist in Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, where governments police and control student and faculty speech, academic inquiry, and research funding. The climate of fear among my colleagues in these countries was chilling to witness firsthand, and the diminishment of research and economic opportunity that resulted from that fear even more dire. Syrian and Egyptian colleagues learned to speak in code, terrified that a misplaced word or idea could cause them to lose the scholarly advancement they had managed to achieve. Higher education in those countries languished, stifled under the heavy hand of authoritarian diktats and confronting the loss of faculty and students who left to seek the greater freedom offered elsewhere.

Yet this story already feels chillingly familiar in Texas: a 2023 AAUP survey of 1,900 faculty across the state found that partisan efforts to control tenure and academic speech have caused over a quarter of Texas faculty to seek to interview elsewhere. Nearly two thirds would not recommend Texas to applicants for positions here. Students, too, are already suffering from the reduction in curricular choice and academic freedom caused by a climate of partisan censorship of the very ideas that have made Texas a global leader.

It's not too late: Texas still leads the nation as a powerful economic and innovation hub, with its campuses renowned around the world for educational and research excellence. This is precisely because for over 150 years the freedom and independence so deeply embedded in every Texan's sense of self has prevailed in higher education. SB 37's passage would tarnish that legacy of freedom, choice, and academic distinction and usher in a dark and dystopian future for our state.

Stephennie Mulder
Associate Professor
Department of Art & Art History
College of Fine Arts
The University of Texas at Austin
Zip code: 78702
State Senator: Sarah Eckhard

No to Bill 37: Against Paternalism and For Liberty

Let the record show that I affirm I am speaking as a private individual

In 2019, I moved to West Texas from New York. I've found the people here to be generous, independent, and down-to-earth. Even when disagreeing on an issue, people here still open the door for you, buy you a beer, or lend you a hand. I don't see "ideological fragility," or fear of different views; the more I've talked with people, the more complex they reveal themselves to be. With the exception of a few people with lots of time on their hands, I've neither heard nor seen any concern about being "woke" nor have I seen faculty haranguing students for their use of pronouns or political views.

Yet, when I read the proposed legislation, I see a very different spirit at work: paternalism. Legislating "ideology" assumes that people — and college students in particular — are dupes. It assumes our students are too intellectually weak, naive, or dumb to form their own views, independent of their professor. This is insulting to students. It is counter to the spirit of Texas shared with me when I first visited the state.

What I've learned in my more than three decades of research and teaching is this: people are not so fragile; they are not "blank slates." Students are not so easily shaped by faculty, or anyone else for that matter. If I had the kind of control over students' minds that is suggested by the proposed legislation, my teaching would be a heck of a lot more effective. If you have ever taught, you know this to be true.

What this has also taught me is that students value the freedom to think for themselves. They value debate, discussion — the art of an argument. They are not afraid of ideology. Students are adept at learning what an ideology or political viewpoint advocates without becoming blind adherents. For them, ideas are not contagions; they do not require an "ideological mask" for protection. That you may think they do is very troubling to me.

So ask yourself: Do you want your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren, to attend universities where some unelected central government authority tells them what they can and cannot think? In your heart, is that what you really want?

Author Name: Mark Garrison, Ph.D.

Author Position: Professor, West Texas A&M University

Author Zip code: 79109

Texas House: Congressman John T. Smithee

Texas Senate: Senator Kevin Sparks

I oppose SB 37.

Julia Guernsey

78757; Representative Gina Hinojosa; Senator Sarah Eckhardt

Texas faculty member, COFA

Name: Sean E. Whitten
Zip Code: 75023
State Senate Rep: Angela Paxton
Title: Staff member of a Texas higher education institution

To Members of the Committee,

Today, I write in strong and unequivocal opposition to Senate Bill 37, alongside my colleagues in the Texas AAUP and countless faculty across the state who see this bill for what it is: a deliberate attack on academic freedom and the core values of higher education.

SB 37 represents a dangerous shift in how our public universities operate. It strips faculty—the subject matter experts and stewards of academic integrity—of their rightful role in shared governance. It hands unchecked authority to governing boards and a politically appointed state oversight office, giving them control over curriculum reviews, hiring decisions, and the internal affairs of our institutions. This is a clear attempt to erode faculty influence and suppress free and open inquiry.

Faculty are the lifeblood of our universities. They are the educators, researchers, and public servants who shape the minds of Texas' future leaders. They are the ones who ensure that students receive a rigorous, well-rounded education rooted in critical thinking and diverse perspectives. By undermining faculty autonomy and dismantling shared governance, SB 37 compromises not only the ability to teach and conduct research freely, but also the credibility of our institutions as places of independent thought and innovation.

Make no mistake—this bill will harm Texas. It will drive away top faculty, discourage investment in our institutions, and limit the opportunities available to students across the state.

We will not stand by as academic freedom is dismantled. Faculty, students, and communities across Texas will resist any effort to turn higher education into a political tool.

I urge you to reject SB 37 and protect the integrity of higher education in Texas.

Thank you for your time.

Alida Louisa Perrine
3209B Mossrock Dr.
Austin, Texas 78757

State Senator: Sarah Eckhardt

My name is Dr. Alida Perrine and I teach Spanish and Portuguese in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin. I am submitting testimony regarding SB 37 for myself as a private citizen.

The bureaucratic oversight proposed in SB 37 would be inefficient and would undermine faculty expertise. A preeminent research university like the University of Texas has become a leader across fields in large part because of the excellence of the faculty. Students choose this university because of its reputation and the high quality of the academic programs. Political interference in faculty governance and decisions about programs and hiring will severely undermine that quality and reputation in short order. Faculty have years of education and experience that qualify us to build curricula and grow our programs in ways that best meet the goals of our students and prepare them to evolve their own fields after graduation. Removing faculty oversight from curriculum development and handing those decisions over to political appointees will be devastating across disciplines. How can such important decisions be made by board members with no knowledge of our fields? With no background in education? With no hands-on experience in the classroom? With no idea of the workings of our departments? It's insulting to take those decisions away from us, to ask us to teach courses and work with students, and to not allow us to build our own academic programs based on our knowledge. If a bill as disastrously wasteful and unnecessary as SB 37 passes, I'm sure I won't be the only faculty member to start looking for academic positions at institutions in other states where our qualifications are not snubbed by our state politicians. Senator Creighton likes to treat professors like we're naughty school children who need to be supervised and kept in line when we are simply doing our jobs as researchers and educators and exercising our rights to academic expression and governance. I oppose this bill and I hope you don't waste any more time discussing it. Thank you for your time in reading my comments.

Sebastian Lecourt
77025
Faculty, University of Houston
State Representative: Lauren Simmons
State Senator: Molly Cook

I'm concerned that many aspects of SB 37 will hamper the ability of Texas public universities to be competitive in the national and international marketplace.

Speaking from my own experience as a faculty member, I can say that adding additional layers of bureaucracy and micromanagement compromises the ability of faculty focus on producing the best teaching and research. Jumping through new administrative hurdles or responding to changing mission directives every couple of years makes it harder for us to focus on our core mission.

I'm also concerned that giving state bureaucrats further control over hiring and curriculum will also hamper our the spirit of intellectual independence that make Texas universities great. Censoring certain questions or subjects in advance prevents robust classroom discussions and pathbreaking research agendas. In terms of hiring, faculty must be able to choose the best talent for their programs based on their knowledge of their fields and disciplines. Giving politicians who not primarily driven by intellectual agendas veto power risks driving away our best faculty and gradually turning Texas public universities into a second-rate system. Texas is a growing state and we need our state universities to be able to compete with the best public and private institutions nationwide.

People in my neighborhood prominently fly the flags of their Texas Universities. They are proud to be alumni of UT, A&M, Texas Tech, or UH because these institutions have been given the freedom by the state to develop their own distinctive characters and programs, to recruit top talent, and to adapt to the needs of students. Putting more non-academic bureaucrats in charge will compromise all this.

Dr. Cary Cordova

78741

State Senator Judith Zaffirini

I am writing to ask you to please reject Senate Bill 37. I am writing to you as an individual, but this statement is shaped by my experience as a faculty member in higher education for more than two decades [currently working in the Department of American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin].

This bill places enormous power to oversee higher education in the hands of a political appointee, who may have no experience in teaching, research, or university service, and whose loyalties are tied more to political platforms than to the ideals of higher education. No matter what party you belong to, this political oversight should concern you. This office will be granted unlimited power to intimidate and censor faculty research and water down curriculum to accord with changing political allegiances.

The bill is composed with the premise that there is no oversight of higher education. This is false. Universities already seek outside accreditation for curriculum from organizations like the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Curriculum does not emerge out of thin air, but out of the efforts of engaged faculty, departments, college deans, administrators, and accrediting organizations. Universities must stay relevant to earn the tuition of students, or they will not succeed. The best colleges and universities already work tirelessly to serve the needs of students, parents, community members, and future employers to ensure the value of their degrees.

This bill feels punitive and determined to intimidate faculty governance and dismiss faculty expertise. This new governance is a way to chill free speech and intimidate students and faculty from asking challenging questions. If you would like to decrease the value of a college degree in Texas, then this bill has every capacity to deliver that effect.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cary Cordova
Austin, TX 78741

SB 37 Testimony
March 19, 2025

Good day, my name is April Thomas and I am a concerned student from Denton, TX (76201, Brent Hagenbuch). I am writing today because I am deeply disturbed by the proposed Senate Bill 37—government overreach and censorship disguised as “reform.” I graduated from Texas A&M University in 2015 with bachelor’s degrees in communication and anthropology and in 2024 from the University of North Texas with a master’s degree in interdisciplinary studies. I am currently in my second to last semester of coursework for a PhD in multicultural women's and gender studies from Texas Woman’s University—a program that bills such as SB 37 would seek to eliminate.

When I testified against SB 17 in 2023, I was in the process of applying for PhD programs. I almost didn’t apply for the program at TWU because I was scared of the impact of bills like SB 16, SB 17, and SB 18. I was worried about applying for a program that I may not be able to finish if compliance with state law meant that classes couldn’t be taught, research couldn’t be conducted, and faculty couldn’t maintain their positions. I thought long and hard, and talked to several students and faculty, about my options and, ultimately, decided that I didn’t want to be pushed from my home by hostile legislation, that I wanted to stay and fight to maintain access to transformative educational spaces for all. I’m glad I applied to and decided to enroll in the program at TWU—it’s been a wonderful experience, with knowledgeable and supportive professors and courses that have taught me so much about the kind of person I want to be and the ways I want to positively impact the world. I can’t imagine having moved out of state for school, away from my family, friends, and community...but, if I were applying for the program this semester instead of two years ago—after having seen the devastating impact of compliance and over-compliance with SB 17 across the state and knowing about the bills such as SB 37 that have been proposed this session—I can't say I would have made the same decision. In fact, I most likely would have chosen to move out of state to continue my education in a place where I wouldn't have to worry about my ability to receive a quality, comprehensive, censorship-free education or whether I would be able to finish my degree at all.

SB 37 undermines faculty expertise, threatens academic freedom, and jeopardizes student success, both by depriving marginalized students of the ability to see themselves and their lived experiences reflected in the materials they study and by depriving all students of the opportunity to build understanding and empathy through learning about the experiences of others. Whether we like it or not—personally, I love it—we live in a diverse state in a diverse nation, among people with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and opinions. We are taught to fear difference because we do not understand it, something the increasing political polarization, attacks on diversity, and fear-mongering intentionally amplify; but I imagine a different world for us, one where we no longer fear each other because we have learned to empathize with each other instead. That is the kind of world I want to live in, the kind of state I want to live in—and I know so many other people who feel the same way. Legislation such as SB 37 threatens that vision in a way that is incredibly disheartening and makes Texas feel like a

dangerous, hostile place to live. With that in mind, I urge you to vote against SB 37 to protect not only our access to meaningful educational spaces free of big government censorship and the values of care and community that make Texas feel like home to so many. Thank you.

Hello, my name is David, I live at 78732, my senator is Donna Campbell, and I am currently enrolled at UT Dallas as a student. SB 37 would have dramatic and long-lasting negative effects for both the student body and faculty at institutions of higher education. Right now, faculty senates allow professors a say in making policies surrounding the classes they teach. By stripping them of this right, we not only remove educators' ability to govern their classrooms, but also risk losing highly trained and amazing professors to this gross over-reach in policy.

One of the best professors I ever had in college, a public health professor, dedicated her life to teaching and public service. She spent many years overseas in the Peace Corp helping underserved communities reach resources like healthcare and food. After her time abroad, she spent hundreds of hours conducting research on ways to improve the social environment and resource efficiency of these remote communities. Because of previous policy like this, she felt forced out of her position causing her to move to a different state; This wasn't an isolated incident either. Texas is facing a severe teacher and professor shortage that will only be exacerbated by bills like this.

As a member of the student government at UT Dallas, I can say with confidence that the faculty has done tremendous work to improve the lives of the student body and professors. Whether it be passing a resolution to excuse classes to see the solar eclipse last year, or working directly with students to have our voice heard, functioning faculty senates are a cornerstone of a successful university.

Ian Abbey

77084, Paul Bettencourt

Prairie View A&M University, History

Faculty

Writing on behalf of myself as a private citizen and not on behalf of any institution, I find it unconscionable that the state government is attempting to meddle in university curriculum. SB 37 will effectively give political officers control over what is taught at universities. Professors have the experience and specialized education necessary to design their own courses and teach material that has been refined through years of instruction. It is a system that works. I have designed courses ranging from culinary history to the history of piracy. My students found them to be engaging and informative, and I didn't need unqualified government administrators looking over my shoulder.

Texas state universities are some of the finest in the nation and that is due to faculty, staff, and students collaborating in an environment where academic freedom is paramount. Implementing this bill is needlessly punitive and wasteful. This will dissuade many instructors from applying to Texas universities and compel current faculty to leave for other states. Such a situation will reduce the quality of education for all students and make employers reconsider whether they should hire graduates from Texas universities. We professors care for our campuses and our students, and this bill will ruin the legacies that Texas A&M and UT schools have cultivated over generations.

My name is Lisa Moore. I live in Austin, Texas, 78723. My state representative is Donna Howard and my state senator is Sarah Eckhardt. I have been a faculty member at The University of Texas at Austin since 1991.

As someone who has devoted her career to serving the people of Texas as a public university professor at our flagship state university, I am writing to urge you to oppose SB 37, which I have heard called the “University Death Star Bill.” This bill would shut down our public higher education system, one of the best in the world, and an important economic engine for the state. We prepare thousands of students each year to enter the workforce and lead lives of purpose. This bill will grind all that to a halt. It duplicates oversight already provide by multiple state agencies including the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. It introduces government oversight into the day-to-day workings of our campuses in a way that is inefficient and constrains student freedom of choice.

Further, the bill is clearly unconstitutional. The provision barring faculty from endorsing certain points of view or legislation is a straightforward denial of free speech rights protected under the First Amendment. And the provision barring faculty participation in our own grievance and disciplinary proceedings violates constitutional due process protections by denying faculty a hearing in front of our peers.

Finally, the bill would put in place government interference in any decision made by a Texas public college or university. All decision-making would rest with political appointees. This would be financially and administratively burdensome—probably impossible to carry out in practice, the very definition of bad legislation. And it would cause our great public university system to collapse.

For the sake of the people of Texas, for our children and grandchildren’s educational and employment opportunities, for the sake of the freedom to teach and learn, I urge you to oppose SB 37.

My name is Kelly Bezio, and I am providing this testimony as a private individual. My zip code is 78412 and my senator is Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa. I currently work as a faculty member in the College of Liberal Arts at a regional public university. I am writing today in opposition to SB 37.

SB 37 will prevent high quality education in Texas through micromanagement and over-regulation. Increasing success in higher education requires faculty, staff, administrators, and students to be able to pivot to respond to new conditions. The introduction of widely available AI tools, for instance, are just one example of rapidly shifting learning conditions. To respond—and thrive—within rapidly changing educational environments, locally-situated experts need to be able to apply their knowledge and expertise to rapidly evolving needs of students.

I run a Master's program at my institution, and helping students to complete their degrees in a timely manner and with strong career preparation skills depends on an on-the-ground team approach. Whereas advisors rely on me to help students understand what the best courses are to help them achieve their intellectual goals, I rely on Career Services to help set up effective alumni panels on job options and networking skills. I help to convey student needs to faculty as they develop courses and provide relevant professional development opportunities. University leadership works with graduate coordinators to identify funding needs and opportunities as well as to identify areas for growth and innovation. Getting all these stakeholders to work together to increase the number of post-graduate degrees requires everyone to be bringing their expertise to the table. The system of oversight by political appointees—who are not and cannot be experts in all these areas—will make it impossible all the people needed to drive higher education to do their jobs and respond to changing conditions. Instead, immobilized by red tape, faculty, staff, and administrators will look elsewhere for employment opportunities in which their knowledge can actively drive innovation.

Let's say "hell no" to SB 37 and say "hell yes" to the talented workforce that makes up higher education in Texas.

My name is Nathan Grant Smith, Ph.D., and I live in Houston in zip code 77009. My State Senator is Carol Alvarado. I am writing to strongly oppose SB 37. I have been a university professor for 21 years, including 16 years teaching and conducting health research at Texas universities. I write in my role as a citizen of Texas who is a Professor at the University of Houston. I am a Professor in the College of Education and train students who go on to be licensed psychologists, providing critical mental and behavioral healthcare to patients across Texas and the country. My views are my own and not my employer's.

SB 37 has serious flaws and will have many negative consequences for the students of Texas, the faculty of Texas higher education institutions, and the broader economy and health of the entire state. The legislation would put universities and many of their degree programs at risk of losing accreditation, which would harm currently enrolled students and would make Texas universities much less competitive for attracting students locally and nationally. Likewise, SB 37 encroaches on academic freedom and would lead to fewer qualified faculty members coming to Texas and more of them leaving Texas. Already, Texas is less competitive for attracting top talent to universities because of bans on DEI and overstepping of the Texas Legislature into academic affairs of universities. SB 37 would make Texas a very unwelcoming place for faculty to move to, which would harm students. Moreover, professors contribute to advances in technology, business, health and healthcare, and in every discipline imaginable. SB 37 would harm the economy of Texas and the health of its citizens. The brain drain that SB 37 would create would have far-reaching negative consequences.

In addition, SB 37 creates unnecessary and wasteful bureaucracy and government overreach. It removes the university faculty who are experts in their chosen fields from critical decisions about curriculum and self-government and gives that power to individuals without the appropriate training or expertise.

SB 37 is a clear example of government overreach. It will be devastating to universities, which will have far-reaching ripple effects throughout every corner of the state. We have excellent universities all over the state that produce talented graduates and positively contribute to every aspect of Texas life. This is a bill that tries to fix something that is not broken; it will break something that already works well. Therefore, this bill must be abandoned.

Thank you for your consideration,
Dr. Nathan Grant Smith

Good afternoon,

My name is Emily Beebe. My zip code is 77808 and my state senator is Paul Dyson. I am a current PhD student at the University of Houston. I am here today to voice my strong opposition to Senate Bill 37.

I have lived in Texas for 4 years. In these 4 years I have watched the majority of my close friends, acquaintances, and mentors that are in academia leave this state due to policies such as SB 37; policies that create unnecessary and invasive government involvement in academic affairs. I cannot fathom choosing to engage in academia if our faculty is forced to comply with non-expert opinions regarding our college curriculum. It completely upends the entire academic purpose to have our state politicians dictating curriculum in each unique and specific field of education. We literally have created universities to produce experts in knowledge capable and responsible for this knowledge production of future generations. This bill devalues our degrees, our expertise, and our abilities to teach. At a time when professors are already facing many difficult decisions, this bill threatens the field of academia further by making everyone's jobs even harder. This bill signals that the Texas state legislature does not trust our institutions to provide education. This bill infringes on academic freedom and the rights of students and faculty alike. Academic institutions have always been tasked with educating students according to the standards that all experts in each field must meet, I am asking you all to respect this process and not further undermine and devalue Texas' higher education.

March 19, 2025

Dear Committee Members, Representatives, and Senators:

I write to you as a private citizen regarding SB 37/HB 4499 and how these bills stand to impact my work as Associate Professor with tenure at the University of Houston, where I have taught and conducted my research as a faculty member in the School of Art since 2015. I am a PhD graduate of Rice University and have dedicated my intellectual labors to my field for over 20 years, publishing several books and dozens of articles, and winning numerous top distinctions in my field. Alumni of my program contribute daily to the vibrant arts economy in Houston, which generates over \$1.3 billion in economic activity annually and supports over 21,000 jobs. I have served as Faculty Senate Member of the Research and Scholarship Committee, where I collaborated with faculty across all fields to review applications for small research grants ranging from \$5,000-\$40,000 and attended monthly meetings of the entire Senate body and reported information back to my colleagues in the College of the Arts.

Faculty Senates conduct unglamorous workaday administration that the university simply could not afford to hire or legislate out to other bodies who don't have the particular knowledge and embeddedness in the day-to-day operations of the institution. There is nothing conspiratorial or ideological about our work. With direct knowledge of student needs and cutting-edge research in our respective fields, we help the university run, with an eye toward best practices in our disciplines. The Faculty Senate is a means of communication and dialogue between the faculty and administration around our shared investment in the university as an institution of advanced learning and career preparation. Our relationship is wholly collaborative, not confrontational. Adding layers of bureaucracy via overseeing boards would be redundant to the systems of oversight that are already in place. Each semester, as required by state law, I upload my syllabi and current CV to a publicly accessible registry. It seems to me that the transparency you seek is already in place.

If these bills are passed, our campuses will continue to lose talented faculty and find it more difficult to attract the best candidates. In a 2024 AAUP survey, 28% of Texas faculty said they had interviewed elsewhere since 2022; I include myself in that number. The top issue grounding a desire to leave is the state's political climate (48.6%) followed by anxieties about academic freedom (46.3%) and salary (42.8%). Among respondents, more than 45% said they knew of faculty who had refused positions offered at their campus, due to tenure policy changes and political attacks on higher education. Texas is already out of line with AAUP standards regarding tenure and academic freedom; it is not a good look for us on the national stage. The proposed bills would deny faculty expertise, trample on the freedom of students and faculty to learn, teach, and research in innovative ways, and would introduce compliance strain in an already under-resourced learning environment.

Sincerely,

Natilee Harren, PhD
Associate Professor and Program Head of Art History
University of Houston School of Art
Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts
University of Houston

Zip code 77023; Represented by Representative Christina Morales and Senator Carol Alvarado

My name is Greg Moses [78753, Sen. Eckhardt, TXST, current faculty], and I speak for myself in opposition to SB 37 and its attack on AAUP principles of faculty shared governance.

A mid-level faculty member came to campus looking for work, and he was questioned by senior faculty. The visitor talked about a course he was teaching, and how he was getting to the point where the course seemed to be working really well.

“So let me get this straight,” said the senior faculty. “You are telling me that that it’s taking you ten years to fully develop a course?”

“Yes,” said the mid-level visitor. “It’s taking me about ten years.”

The senior faculty leaned back and said, “That sounds about right.”

So when I read this bill about how Texas is going to disempower faculty and disconnect them from their primary responsibility for curriculum development, I am puzzled.

Or let’s take the example of Artificial Intelligence. Right now, we are responding to an accelerating—and volatile—social force. New technologies come out every week: DeepSeek, Gemini, Cline, Claude, Manus, Model Context Protocols (MCPs).

Faculty are forming small groups to discuss AI and its value for higher ed. Students already have it in their hands. China races against Silicon Valley at light speed. Who do you think the law should make us wait for?

To you, the curriculum may look like a series of packages that are delivered from point A to point B, but to students and faculty on a college campus, curriculum is how we organize our daily habits of curiosity and inquiry.

Faculty senate, peer review, and due process are some of the responsibilities that flow from the faculty’s primary duty to teach. Texas faculty deserve the dignity of our shared governance as set forth in longstanding AAUP guidelines, including the right to appeal under the judgment of our peers.

Legislation is what legislators do. Curriculum is what faculty do. I’m not sure how lawmakers get to the conclusion that there is someone more qualified than faculty to take primary responsibility for guiding curriculum and professional development among fellow teachers.

There are time-tested protocols for developing curriculum. Faculty have been doing it for thousands of years. With the permission of this committee, we would like to keep at it, with dignity, respect, and the time-honored principles as they are articulated and upheld by the American Association of University Professors. Thank you for your time.

Christina L. Sisk

77006, State Senator Molly Cook

University of Houston, Department of Hispanic Studies

Associate Professor (faculty)

I am writing as someone who teaches a core course at the University of Houston. These courses are part of the requirement by The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Senate Bill 37 would eliminate the possibility of fulfilling the accreditation requirements at our Texas universities. If Senate Bill 37 passes, we will see our students' education negatively affected. Without accreditation, our universities in Texas will also be less marketable, and we will see a decrease in out-of-state students coming to study with us.

I am concerned about the quality of education that we will be able to offer to our students in the future.

1. Dr. Andrew Joseph Pegoda
2. 77566, Joan Huffman
3. Faculty, University of Houston; Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
4. Alumni of Brazosport College in Lake Jackson, Texas (one degree); University of Houston-Clear Lake in Houston, Texas (one degree); University of Houston in Houston, Texas (two degrees) & Faculty, University of Houston in Houston, Texas

Good day to you. I'm Dr. Andrew Joseph Pegoda. Speaking as an individual, exercising my first amendment rights. I am 38, and a life-long resident of Texas. I have four degrees from Texas institutions and have been working at Texas institutions of higher ed for almost twenty years.

Diversity makes us strong. Academic freedom lets us learn and teach. Shared governance makes everything stronger. It is because of the strong system of Texas colleges and universities that trained me that I have published over a hundred articles and have given dozens of invited talks.

As a professor, I have taught thousands of students. These students come with their own ideas and experiences, eager to share such and learn from others. Inclusion is at the heart of everything.

College students in Texas are the future workforce. Texas needs a strong workforce, and it includes women, disabled people, queer people, immigrants, and others. There is room for everyone. Everyone already has a place and especially has a place with DEI is celebrated.

Please give your attention to more pressing matters such as poverty, healthcare, gun control, illiteracy, and the like. All educators want to do is share knowledge and help Texas have a bright future, economically and culturally. This can't happen without a strong system of higher ed. The proposed changes will harm Texas students and Texas workers and Texas employers and lead to a "brain drain" whereby knowledgeable people will look to live elsewhere.

Thank you for your time. A concerned Texan,
Dr. Andrew Joseph Pegoda

Statement on SB 37

(Zip Code: 78753; Texas Senate District 14, Senator Sarah Eckhardt)

My name is Jo Hsu. I'm an associate professor of Rhetoric & Writing and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. I'm also a proud alumnus of a Texas University, and I am making the following statement as a private individual.

My family is from Taiwan, but my grandparents spoke Japanese because they grew up when Taiwan was ruled by the Japanese Empire— which not only reformed and censored primary education but largely kept Taiwanese people out of secondary and higher education. My parents grew up after the Chinese Nationalist Party was exiled to Taiwan and established martial law. The new government also seized control of public schools and mandated a curriculum that taught “party principles.” I know how fortunate I am to have grown up in a time and place that values education as a crucial component of a free and just society— and *not* as a means of governmental control. From this perspective, I cannot see any justification for subjecting university curricula to the whims of whoever is in power. When political appointees determine what students can learn, it's no longer an education; it's indoctrination. Please vote no on SB 37.

Borris Miles – Senate District 13

Lauren Simmons – Texas Houst District 146

To whom it may concern,

With a small window of time to submit my remarks---and decades of experience in higher education, I write to with you with great concern for the future of public education in Texas. I am currently an associate professor at the University of Houston, where I teach and mentor incredible students and faculty and engage in research in the humanities and social sciences. I am an award-winning educator and scholar here in Texas and I find myself utterly dismayed to see the kind of proposal that is in SB 37 / HB 4499. I am deeply saddened for the state of Texas and the many educators disrespected by this bill.

I will say here needs to be said again and again: It is in no way justifiable to have individuals who do not work in higher education making decisions about the systems we have put in place to provide education for our students. It is like having an ineffectual car salesman running the US government. There is a reason that I spent 6 years in dedicated study to earn a PhD, under the supervision of other experts, reading all of the relevant peer reviewed research in order to become a professor and teach university students. Given that what we are teaching in the classroom is based on decades of knowledge production and in the fields in which we teach, it makes no sense that a politician should come in a declare our work irrelevant to the broader society and damage the educational system as we know it.

If the scholarship doesn't interest you, step back. If it offends you because you do not yet understand it, consider looking away. Allow others to engage with new ideas and decide what they think—for themselves. That is in fact what education is and as an educator I am committed to helping my students learn what they came to college to learn. University of Houston students need to know how to navigate a broad range of ideas, critically analyze unique perspectives and negotiate differences of opinions. These are skills they gain by going to college to study with experts across a vast number of fields of research and study. They came to college interested in research and in thinking for themselves. Omitting and erasing knowledge, decades and centuries of knowledge is deceitful and counter-productive to our goals at the university. I teach in anthropology and gender studies, both of which well-established disciplines to which I orient our students. What we do in academia at a public institution should not be a mystery to the general public because our lectures and events are open access. They are available in person and online as are faculty who are committed to sharing knowledge. We train our students to be better citizens. They have every right to know the information we share about people's lives, histories, perspectives and experiences in the world. There are as many viewpoints as there are students at our university.

Interventions on the part of under-informed legislators who seek to drive the humanities out of our institutions (with little knowledge about what we teach in our classrooms) is of great concern to me. A political appointee/elected official is not qualified to make decisions about university curriculum and hiring practices of faculty. This kind of additional oversight at the

University of Houston--when there are already many existing systems in place--just interferes with our work and damages our reputation as an educational institution, driving away so many potential students from our schools. Is that the goal, to destroy our educational system in Texas?

It troubles me deeply that as educators we find ourselves are wasting time defending our right to serve and bring our expertise to students in the state of Texas. My role as a professor, an expert in higher education, is a responsibility I take extremely seriously. I am alarmed that after so much training for this profession I now have a politician with a political agenda intervening in my profession with SB 37. There is no reason for this level of oversight of what we teach and how---aside from taking away our right to freedom of speech under this controlling regime of government. This overreach will have a chilling effect on public education in Texas as the state government continues to drive away brilliant educators and scholars who we want in our state. We have earned the right to teach and research in the ways that we want, like the generations that came before us. We have earned our status as expert educators. And there is just so much more that we need to be attending to in our society so that people can live and so that young people can have a future to look forward to. Our students know this!

I ask that my representatives loudly oppose SB 37 / HB 4499 and all those who attempt to bring these bills to the Texas legislature. Dismantling American society by destroying public education cannot and should not be the priority of our politicians. We seek your support and engagement as we educate those around us, through public education and research based on valued and respected knowledge across a great many disciplines. We do this work to create a better society for all!

Sincerely,

Dr. Rachel A. Quinn
Associate Professor
Department of Comparative Cultural Studies
Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies
University of Houston

3822 Luca Street
Houston, TX 77021
rachelaquinn@gmail.com

I am writing as a private citizen to express my opposition to SB 37 and HB 4499. The Texas constitution specified that the state create a university of the "first class." For more than twenty years I have been very proud and honored to teach students, of all different backgrounds and political persuasions, about the American history and culture. I begin my courses by making clear to students: I am not interested in teaching you what to think. I am teaching you how to think critically about the society we have inherited the world we live in. You should never feel like you have to share my opinions. You do have to present rational arguments that you can support with valid evidence. I prepare my students to be nimble minded professionals and civic-minded members of their communities.

Students who figure out what my own political views are have explicitly praised my openness to their (opposing) viewpoint.

I must say that this bill will prevent UT from being of a university the first class. Shared governance and academic freedom, the ability to teach and research without fetters, are the hallmarks of all great universities. A bill like this would remove our standing in the AAU, which determines the leading research universities. We will no longer be able to attract top faculty, major grants and outstanding graduate students from around the world. Our prestige will suffer immensely, Texas students will suffer and the Texas economy will suffer. Passage of this bill would represent a hollow ideological victory.

Willow Teaney (she/her/hers)

University of Texas at Dallas Undergraduate Student, Class of 2026, School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Hobson Wildenthal Honors College, National Merit Scholarship Program
ZIP Code 75080; represented by Rep. Mihaela Plesa

I am not here to argue that SB 37 isn't aligned with conservative governing principles. Many of my fellow students, teachers, citizens have already articulated just that. Instead, I ask you to take a step back and into the shoes of the students that this bill supposedly has its interests aligned with:

Is this the university you would want to go to? A university where the minor you dreamed of spending your money and time working towards in the pursuit of knowledge as its own reward no longer exists because a bunch of men in suits that haven't stepped foot in a classroom since before you were born willed it so? A university whose only purpose is to manufacture cogs to fit into the corporate machine? A university where ambition goes to die because you would produce more stock value churning out Microsoft Excel spreadsheets nobody will ever read, turning the knobs on a chatbot to deny the maximum number of people healthcare, designing bombs to blow up brown children on the other side of the globe?

Is this the university you would want to go to? A university where the people writing your curriculum haven't written a research paper in decades, if at all? A university where the autonomy of those actually spending their time enlightening those young minds the government claims to hold dear is at the mercy of the men in said government, hours away, who neither you nor your professor will ever meet? A university in a state where, when faced with incredible economic inequality, floundering healthcare access, rapid degradation of civil liberties—decides to go after university faculty members trying to organize and solve the problems facing them?

Is this the university you would want to go to? I fear that I have not made myself clear enough, and so I shall end like so:

SB 37 will hurt students, and tangibly benefit nobody. SB 37 does nothing to fix the myriad problems plaguing the people of Texas that you refuse to actually do anything meaningful about. SB 37 perfectly represents the necrotic anti-intellectualism plaguing our country today, and will only serve to spread said plague further should it pass.

Do better. Do better, while there is still time.

Written Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 37

March 19, 2025

My name is Dr. Kathryn Van Winkle. I live in zip code 78641, where I am represented by Senator Charles Schwertner.

I am a proud graduate of The University of Texas at Austin. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 37. SB 37 is an egregious example of overregulation and micromanagement on the part of the government. Through its wide-ranging attempts to stifle academic freedom and indoctrinate students, SB 37 would wreak catastrophic damage on the quality and competitiveness of higher education in Texas.

Senate Bill 37 would drive away talented researchers, teachers, and students. If SB 37 had been in effect when I was choosing schools, I would have rejected my scholarship offer at UT and the opportunity to receive an excellent education in my home state. I would have chosen to accept my offer of admission from Stanford University instead.

A university community strangled by SB 37 could not offer me the world-class education that I sought as a free citizen of a free nation. I wanted to learn from experts leading cutting-edge research, and to engage in free debate across the urgent and contentious issues facing the nation and the world. I did not want to study a curriculum constrained by the censorship of political operatives of any ideology.

Damage to Texas higher ed is damage to the Texas economy. As research talent leaves the state, grant money and research infrastructure go with it, money often spent at local businesses, infrastructure that provides many local jobs beyond faculty positions.

I urge the committee to preserve the strengths of these economic engines that serve the people of the state of Texas with integrity and vision. Preserve our world-class institutions of higher education: reject SB 37!

My name is Jeehyun Lim. As a private citizen living in zip code 78723, I would like to respectfully ask my representatives, including Congressman Lloyd Doggett of U.S Congressional District 37 and Representative Sheryl Cole of Texas House District 46, to vote against higher education bills like SB37 that aim to restrict academic freedom and to disregard the expertise of higher education faculty. I was born in South Korea at the tail end of its military regime. My mother served as a professor at the same university in South Korea for over thirty years, a good portion of which was spent under repressive military regimes. I believe I know well what the absence of academic freedom does to educational institutions and the culture of inquiry. My mother loved her university, but she very often privately lamented the lack of a public sphere for debate and discussion. As I grew up hearing, any disagreement with the administration and its policies meant censure and penalties.

I came to the United States for graduate studies because U.S. universities were the best research institutions and because I did not like the authoritarian culture of South Korean universities. I found employment at a U.S. university after finishing my studies and decided to stay as a naturalized American citizen. U.S. universities offered more opportunities for what I wanted to do: research and teach. I moved recently from a public university in the state of New York to the University of Texas at Austin where I am currently employed drawn by its research reputation. If bills restricting academic freedom are passed, I fear that my university will gradually become a weaker research institution. A robust culture of debate and discussion where participants can speak up their views without fear of retribution is the backbone of a strong research university. Please protect academic freedom in Texas.

My name is Erin Burns and I live in Lubbock, Texas 79416, and my senator is Charles Perry. I am writing to oppose SB 37. I currently work in higher education in Texas.

SB 37 strips academic and free speech, and this would apply to conservatives as well. When reading through what this bill would do to higher education, I am very disappointed in the Texas legislature. Should this get out of committee and be passed by the legislature, it would do untold harm to universities in Texas. Texas would have a harder time recruiting top faculty, which they are already losing due to the stripping of DEI Offices and the defunding of the NIH and NSF funds. Lubbock may feel the sting of these cuts soon, as the incoming graduate classes to a place like Texas Tech will be smaller, and the bill risks losing talent because of this type of micromanagement and overregulation.

This bill also adds a wasteful bureaucracy, as there are already several layers of oversight at Texas public colleges and universities. It would increase government inefficiencies and interference while also undermining student choice. But I will also speak to it denying faculty expertise, as I have worked in higher education since 2008, at two different institutions and have served on multiple search committees. Faculty expertise is essential to the hiring processes of the colleges and universities, because faculty get to participate in the hiring of their colleagues with final decisions already resting with administrators. Texas has top ranked universities because of the way this system works.

It also undermines democratic processes, as faculty are elected to positions within the faculty governance structure, and again, if faculty senates are taken away, no one will want to work for a Texas university. Faculty senates work with their administrators all the time to ensure the norms of due process and educational liberty are maintained. Actions of Faculty Senates and hiring committees are already advisory to the President, and many decisions (including on curriculum) must also be approved by the System (in the case of UT, Texas A&M, and Texas State) and the THECB.

Further, it Promotes Educational Censorship and Imposes Prior Restraint on Speech. Policymaking on curriculum should be made by faculty and administrators, who have the necessary expertise in the subject matter. Submitting decisions on core curriculum and academic programs to an office headed by a political appointee is a violation of free speech and academic freedom. Educational liberty is essential to creativity, innovation, and maintaining a system of higher education of the highest quality. Curricula, including courses in the core curriculum, must not be subjected to an ideological litmus test; that would be indoctrination rather than education.

Victoria McSpadden

Regarding the Senate Committee on Education K-16

Zip Code: 75013

Senator: Angela Paxton

University of Texas at Dallas, Bachelor of Electrical Engineering

Current Student

Good afternoon. My name is Victoria McSpadden, and I am a concerned student at the University of Texas at Dallas. I do not represent the University, and all opinions shared are my own.

I am here today because I am deeply disturbed by the lack of notice for this hearing. Public hearings serve as a crucial avenue for community members to express their views, share expertise, and provide feedback on proposed legislation or policy decisions. Without sufficient notice, citizens may not have adequate time to prepare their statements, gather relevant information, or adjust their schedules to attend hearings.

I had hoped to express my viewpoints in person regarding the bills being discussed today. However, due to the short notice, I was unable to travel. This is particularly concerning because these bills directly impact my education. Specifically, Senate Bill 37 regulates what I learn in the core curriculum and affects the minors and certificates I can pursue.

Democracy thrives when citizens are well-informed and actively involved in the legislative process. I request that in the future, public hearings be announced 10 to 14 days in advance, ensuring all Texans can express their opinions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Victoria McSpadden