

George Burdick

Washburn Student Government Association

Opponent Testimony of HB 2348

For the Committee on Judiciary

February 10, 2025

Chair Humphries and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is George Burdick, and I serve as President of Washburn University's Student Government Association. Washburn Student Government Association stands in strong opposition to HB 2348.

As you know, this legislation would prevent postsecondary educational institutions in our state from awarding tenure to our faculty. Tenure exists as a foundational component to our American educational system, enshrining freedom of speech in areas where it most often comes under attack from government. This foundation is further entrenched by our state's long tradition of Home Rule when it comes to educational institutions, a tradition of our governance that this legislation cuts against.

Further, this legislation endangers large parts of my constituency's college experience and academic preparedness. Students inevitably rely on skilled professors to educate and assist them through college. If universities in our state are unable to provide tenure or tenure track positions to new faculty, their recruitment and retention efforts will be severely undermined. Professors who are looking for work will pass over Kansas, and professors who are already here will look for work elsewhere. This will degrade the quality of education in the state, and harm our recruitment.

At my institution, we take pride and rely on our skilled faculty as a point of recruitment; our students expect and attend Washburn based in large part off of the quality of instruction provided. Should our educational acumen decline, our enrollment will follow suit. This will decrease our resources, growth, and outcomes for my constituency; the students.

In addition, this will cause pain for our state's economy. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that our state will create an additional 54,000 jobs that require a degree from a postsecondary institution. At current levels, Kansas will need to produce 34,000 more degrees to meet this demand, according to the University of Kansas' Institute for Policy & Social Research.

Removing tenure will worsen this problem, and it will not be offset by importing new students; the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 179,000 workers will exit our state entirely, with 113,000 of those workers holding Bachelor's degrees or higher. Simply put, these workers will need to be produced in our state, and the removal of tenure will certainly hurt our economy and our society in the face of these facts.

Ultimately though, while I can speak as a Kansan and as a Student at Washburn, I cannot speak for other postsecondary institutions or other college students in our state. So I called each of the Student Body Presidents of the other Kansas postsecondary institutions.

Ella Burrows, Student Body President at Fort Hays State University is opposed.

The Student Body President of the University of Kansas, DaNae Estabine is opposed.

Kylee Hower, Student Body President of Wichita State University is opposed.

The University of Kansas' Medical School Student Body President, Mark Faber, is opposed.

Hannah Eckstein, Student Body President of Pittsburg State University, is opposed.

And Azwad Arif, Student Body President of Emporia State University is opposed.

Each of us strongly urge this committee to maintain academic freedom, respect home rule, protect our state's ability to recruit and retain, and provide for the future of our state's economy. Each of us urges this committee to vote against the passage of HB 2348. Thank you all for my time, and I hope you will take our testimony into consideration.