

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns. I am here testifying on bill HB2348 to address its impacts on academic institutions here in Kansas

My name is Emily Beck. I am a new Assistant Professor at the University of Kansas. While new to the University of Kansas, I am not new to Kansas. Both sides of my family are from the state of Kansas. My mother is from Greeley, Kansas and my father is from Overland Park, Kansas. My parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins are all graduates of Kansas public education institutions. They would want me to clarify – Kansas State University. Many in my family are educators in this state and I was incredibly proud to join them when I accepted my position at KU.

My laboratory focuses on studying a large group of diseases called “Mitochondrial Diseases”. These are diseases where the mitochondria do not function properly in cells. What amazes me about Mitochondrial Diseases is that disruption of one organelle can have such a varied impact on our health. You probably know someone with a Mitochondrial Disease. This group includes Parkinson’s Disease, ALS, MS, muscular dystrophy, cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s Disease.

My lab specifically focuses on understanding how small genetic differences between individuals impact symptom onset, progression, and effectiveness of treatments across individuals. We aim to understand how poorly functioning mitochondria lead to such variable symptoms in so many different organs and try to understand why some treatments are more effective in some people.

We study foundational mechanisms impacting many disease groups. Studying these kinds of fundamental questions are not readily marketable and are therefore not strongly incentivized in industry, but these questions are essential to answer to create effective therapies. Academic research supports answering these essential questions by providing independence from financial incentives while providing job security via tenure once a researcher has gone through rigorous evaluation of their abilities.

Removal of tenure will negatively impact all Kansan higher ed institutions and lead to a large exodus of faculty who need stability. Removal of tenure will also reduce the amount of money brought to the state to support education. I am excited and proud to be an educator in Kansas and I hope to be able to continue my research program here.

Please reject Bill HB2348.