

Written testimony by David Smith in opposition to HB 2348, submitted for circulation and presentation to the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Good afternoon, I'm David Smith from the United Academics of the University of Kansas, and I'm here today to speak in opposition to House Bill 2348.

Let me say, to start with, how much I appreciate the chance to speak to you today. As a faculty member at KU since 1990, I have been concerned with the issues that HB2348 raises for many years -- issues, in the most basic sense, of job security and employment rights for thousands of State of Kansas employees, including hundreds at the University of Kansas.

Improvements in those areas are always possible, and we in United Academics are now working in good-faith dialogue with the University of Kansas administration to make those improvements. That dialogue is going well and holds great promise -- but House Bill 2348 would pull the carpet out from under that dialogue in mid-stream, gravely undermining faculty confidence and job security.

There is no need for exceptional legislative intervention at this moment. Every issue that HB2348 raises is part of the oversight responsibility for higher education that the State has long assigned to the Kansas Board of Regents. That responsibility should not be undermined by an ill-considered legislative enactment which would give academics everywhere second thoughts about working in Kansas.

Over the course of my career I have been lucky enough to assist in the recruitment of many younger colleagues, and through my involvement in United Academics I have come to know many more. I can safely say, from certain personal knowledge, that KU has an incredible roster of dedicated academics whose commitment to educational excellence is unrivaled.

Let us continue to pursue that excellence -- to recruit others with the same mission -- to ensure that our students get top-flight education -- to ensure that Kansas has the best educated workforce possible. That, in a nutshell, is what our ongoing dialogue with the University administration is intended to ensure. HB2348 would compromise that ongoing progress, needlessly disrupting the existing working relationship which binds faculty and academic staff to the mission of higher education in Kansas -- a mission I am confident the House Judiciary Committee shares.

Many thanks for your time and attention!