

Testimony of Elizabeth Dodd February 10, 2025

To the Members of the Committee on the Judiciary:

Thank you for receiving my written testimony against HB 2348. My name is Elizabeth Dodd and I reside in Manhattan, KS. Though I have worked as a professor at Kansas State University for more than 30 years, I write as a private individual and do not represent the university in any fashion.

I write against HB2348, which appears to offer no improvements to the quality of Kansas higher learning institutions but would harm those institutions as well as their employees and the students they serve.

Tenure does not offer so-called blanket protections. Faculty \*already\* can be removed for cause; I have seen this work in practice. When termination of faculty due to professional misconduct is necessary, we already have the means. This bill apparently attempts to fix a problem that does not exist. Instead, this legislation, if implemented, would likely invite expensive and time-consuming lawsuits that universities would eventually lose, since such firings would violate constitutional rights guaranteed by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.

The purpose of tenure is to protect research and scholarship from inappropriate corporate or political meddling. Universities must be forums for the free exchange of ideas and the unfettered pursuit of knowledge. State institutions, in particular, must serve the broad public and not a narrow window of financial or political special interests. Tenure serves the public as well as the individual researchers whose work it protects.

Dedicated faculty at Kansas universities instruct and mentor students who go on to productive careers, many of them within the state. Today's undergraduate education features hands-on learning and research through which college students gain valuable knowledge and experience to support lifelong careers; it depends on faculty who are outstanding in their fields. Undermining tenure is guaranteed to accelerate a "brain drain" of highly effective faculty, diminishing both the quality of student educations and the economic engines that research programs provide the state.

Please do not allow this bill to advance. Thank you for your consideration.