

Joint Statement of IU-Bloomington and Purdue-West Lafayette AAUP Chapters on Senate Bill 202

The Purdue-West Lafayette and Indiana University-Bloomington chapters of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) join in opposing Indiana Senate Bill 202 in its current form. Adoption of SB 202 would severely damage the ability of Indiana's two public Research-1 universities—Purdue-West Lafayette and IU-Bloomington—to recruit and retain outstanding faculty, erasing the State of Indiana's uniquely prominent national profile in higher education.

In its attempt to ensure that all students and faculty at state universities feel confident they can express their political and intellectual views freely—an aspiration the AAUP shares—SB 202 mandates a system of surveillance and political scrutiny that will instead stifle the free flow of ideas. It requires that hiring, tenure, and promotion become subject to reviews that judge faculty based on political criteria, and that post-tenure employment be contingent on further periodic reviews. These measures would severely constrain academic freedom at our university.

Academic freedom is a foundational value for faculty. Faculty broadly accept lower salaries than they could otherwise earn in order to pursue research and teaching with intellectual freedom that fulfills the highest standards of their academic fields. The security imparted by tenure is the fundamental protection of academic freedom; its loss would make university positions in Indiana undesirable. Recruiting and retaining top faculty, who will always have alternatives, will no longer be possible.

Indiana has a great deal to lose if SB 202 is adopted. Too many people are unaware that Indiana punches far above its weight in terms of national research universities. Of the four categories by which doctoral training programs at American research universities are judged, Indiana captures the top rank in two: Purdue is the leader in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, and IU is the leader in Arts and Humanities. In these areas our two schools outpace every other US university, public or private.

It took a century to build that profile for the State of Indiana, and it has brought sustained economic, scientific, cultural, and health benefits to Hoosiers, building a cutting-edge workforce of skilled graduates that has attracted industry, enterprise, and cultural entities to the state. Maintaining that profile is dependent on our continuing to draw top-quality faculty to the state. But Indiana's exceptional success could be quickly and permanently lost if SB 202 eliminates the academic freedom that outstanding faculty consider essential to their careers.

We urge legislators to pursue a different approach to address concerns they have. We support the efforts of our university administrations to advocate for a path that will protect and strengthen rather than destroy Indiana's uniquely successful national and international profile. And we urge corporations, cultural institutions, and citizens who benefit every day from our universities' outstanding performance to oppose SB 202 and to seek better ways forward.

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