

Anne Lewis
Nov. 12, 2024

Senator Creighton and all the members of the committee,

I speak for myself and as a member of the Texas State Employees Union CWA 6186. I also speak (as this is Veterans' Day) as the daughter of a World War II Marine veteran. My father would have allowed Sameeha to finish. He would not have called her "emotional." I am here more to learn more about the plans of the committee to further anti-diversity, anti-equity, and anti-inclusion measures, than to testify about my own experience although I must. We in the labor movement know that an injury to one is an injury to all.

There's a poem by Russian dissident Yevtushenko that begins "It's wrong to tell lies to the young" and ends:

Forgive no error you recognize,
it will repeat itself, increase,
and afterwards our pupils
will not forgive in us what we forgave.

I have taught at UT-Austin for 24 years. I respect the fine Texas students, staff, and faculty who come together in our public universities. Teaching is an art and it's hard to be good at it. I doubt that a prescribed curriculum is a legitimate approach. Neither is closing off opportunity.

You express concerns about Texas work force development. In 2021, only 39% of the people in Texas were non-Hispanic white. Our union reflects that demographic. How do punitive measures against support and opportunity for a diverse group of students, staff, and faculty in higher education benefit the Texas work force now and into the future? (And we are talking about 200,000 University workers at public universities in Texas.)

The last time I was here, it was when on April 2, 2024, TSEU members were fired even though the DEI programs they had worked with were in full compliance with the rules of SB17 as of January 1st. These are the words of one of these workers. "Let 'what starts here' not just change the world, but first transform the hearts of our leaders to lead with love and empathy." That remains our deepest hope.