

8_13_23 TX House testimony against SB17

John Kuempel, Paul Dennis, DeWayne Burns, Dustin Burrows, Travis Clardy, John Raney
John Bucy, Sheryl Cole, Mary Gonzales, Donna Howard, Suleman Lalani
Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

Almost half of you support opportunity for all Texas citizens, academic freedom, and institutional integrity embodied in DEI. Others want to curtail these. But as Frederick Douglass, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." I thank you for the opportunity to struggle.

I speak as a member of our union, elected to serve on the Executive Board of the Texas State Employees Union CWA 6186.

I am a Professor of Practice at UT-Austin. Recipient of a 2010 Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award and this year's Creative Achievement Award in the Moody College of Communications.

We were told by President Hartzell to "hang in there, June will come." What if June comes with an ill wind from our capitol.

In 2020 UT-Austin received the Seal of Excellence as a Hispanic Serving institution. In 2022 UT-Austin joined the Alliance of Hispanic Serving Research Universities alongside 19 other elite research universities. Nationally, we are #5 on the College Choice list for Disability Friendly Colleges. We are #1 for Student Veteran Affairs. All are housed in the DEI offices at UT-Austin.

We are making long needed steps forward.

Representative Cole asked about the numbers of black and brown faculty members.

UT- Austin has had DEI initiatives since 2017. Current full professors are 3.6% African American and 5.9% Latinx. Mainly through DEI initiatives, at the beginning of tenure track, we have 5.3% Black and 10.4% Latinx. Only 35.6% of the women faculty currently are included in the tenured or tenure track category.

The Texas State Employees Union opposes SB 17 and its substitute. Even though this may not be a bread-and-butter issue, it directly impacts the lives of our members. Remember, the labor movement is the folks who brought you the weekend, ended most child labor, and organized with Dr. King in the 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom. We should have your attention and respect.

It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. This is an ill wind. SB17 should not leave this committee.