



21 February 2024

Dear Members of the Indiana House Education Committee:

I write on behalf of the Modern Language Association (MLA), the largest disciplinary association in the humanities, to oppose SB 202. The MLA represents 20,000 faculty members in language, literature, writing, and cultural studies who approach teaching in their fields with integrity and professionalism. Advanced degrees in the humanities equip faculty members with the skills to examine deeply works of literature, film, visual arts, and various aspects of culture, from a number of perspectives. There is no single right answer in cultural analysis, as any faculty member in our fields could tell you. Legislating a method of evaluation for faculty members that would impose political criteria on their teaching does not enforce any kind of fairness—it is the antithesis of fairness. Legislation that mandates granting tenure and firing tenured faculty based on how well a faculty member has fostered “intellectual diversity” within the classroom is an excuse for political interference in academic freedom, and it would drive not only faculty members but also Indiana students away from Indiana public institutions of higher education in favor of institutions not subject to ideological controls on instruction.

Please leave education to educators rather than political appointees with political agendas. Tenure and promotion practices are the methods the profession uses to regulate itself, as any profession does. As legislators would not interfere in the regulatory procedures or professional practice of doctors, they should not interfere in the regulatory procedures or professional practice of professors, who, like doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, regularly undergo rigorous evaluation by peers.

I hate to think of my own PhD alma mater, Indiana University, being unable to recruit the top talent that makes it a leading research and teaching university because it has started imposing political litmus tests on faculty members. Faculty members will leave, and those with integrity will not apply to fill their places.

I urge you to support the autonomy of Indiana institutions of higher education and reject SB202. Feel free to contact me should you want additional information about language and literature education in the US and how to maintain its integrity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula M. Krebs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Paula M. Krebs
Executive Director

