

March 1, 2024

Eric Holcomb
Office of the Governor
Statehouse
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2797
Email: eholcomb@gov.in.gov

Dear Governor Holcomb,

On behalf of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and its 8,000 members we strongly urge you to reject SB 202, a politically motivated measure which would undermine tenure, greatly limit academic freedom, and significantly weaken the integrity of the Indiana University system.

Supporters say the bill will protect diverse views. In fact, it will do the opposite, imposing partisan, ideological government influence aimed at limiting open discourse, discussion, and debate.

The American Anthropological Association stands firmly with the American Association of University Professors in support of the essential principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure, which state that tenure is essential in advancing the purpose of institutions of higher education in service of the common good and that the common good depends upon the free search for truth. As noted in our recent reaffirmation of these principles, "In these institutions, tenure provides an important measure of protection for unrestrained teaching, research, and service. This protection helps the academy, and the disciplines it supports, including anthropology, attract and retain qualified persons."

We are also concerned that in the current climate of divisive and rancorous public discourse, tenured faculty positions may be placed at risk with chilling effect, all cloaked in the disingenuous language of "intellectual diversity" when, in fact, the need for greater open discourse on our campuses has never been greater. When we don't protect our university faculties' freedom to pursue open-ended inquiry, we cut off the quest for fundamental understanding as well as the ways in which advances in understanding can be applied to today's complex problems.

Tenure is indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society. SB 202 is a threat to the faculty of all Public Indiana Universities, and we urge you in the strongest possible terms to use the full capacities of your office to preserve, protect, and promote the pursuit of knowledge and the free exchange of ideas.

Sincerely,



Whitney Battle Baptiste
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