



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

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Rep. Emerson 608-237-9191
Rep. Shankland 608-237-9171
Rep. Anderson 608-237-9147
Rep. Joers 608-237-9179
Rep. Stubbs 608-237-9177

Democratic Committee Members' Statement on Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities Hearing

Madison- Today was the final in a series of hearings of the Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee focused on free speech on college campuses. Democratic members of the Colleges & Universities committee released the following statement:

“Free speech is an invaluable right and we all recognize the importance of everyone coming to the table to share their ideas, experiences, and perspectives. It is the height of irony for all four of the Assembly Colleges and Universities campus free speech hearings to only include invited speakers. Wisconsin has a remarkable shared governance model, and our faculty, staff, and students should always be involved and at the table to share their thoughts and experiences. Chairman Murphy made minimal effort to work with the Democratic members of the committee and failed to include the opportunity for public testimony. He speaks so highly of viewpoint diversity, but clearly does not have enough faith in it to have included it in his own hearings on the topic.

“We are disturbed at the common thread throughout the hearing today regarding higher education funding and diversity, equity, & inclusion (DEI). At a time when [71% of companies](#) surveyed have implemented DEI initiatives, it is both misguided and backwards to consider ending DEI at UW System campuses.

“Students benefit from campus environments where they experience all forms of diversity, not just diversity of thought. To suggest that lawmakers should cut DEI programming from UW System in order to receive public funding, as [Speaker Vos has suggested](#) and was implied in today’s hearing, is not only wrong, but exactly the suppression of free speech that Republicans continue to warn about. Our university system is already underfunded, [ranking 43rd in the nation](#), and to tie this funding to partisan politics is reckless and will only further disadvantage our public institutions and the students who attend them.

“We stand ready and willing to work with our colleagues across the aisle on the pressing issues facing our UW System and campuses across Wisconsin: funding, access, and affordability. Instead of an invited list of speakers, we encourage Chairman Murphy to hold true public hearings and invite all students, faculty, and staff to share their viewpoints. If not, we will continue to be disappointed in these hearings, which are the perfect example of what not to do when hosting a discussion — or lack thereof— on free speech.”

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