

Guide on Giving Testimony at the SB 17 Implementation Hearing on May 14



How to Testify:

- [Write your testimony](#) beforehand or use the sample testimony below:
 - Keep it to 2 minutes long. The sample testimony without your story comes at about a minute, so you can practice to make sure it times out correctly.
 - Review background information for context. [See Hearing Agenda here](#).
 - Use your story! Personal narratives are so important in this space, so tie how it impacts you and others back to the issues, and make the call to action clear!
 - [Check out this Logistics Doc for questions about location, schedule, and emergency contacts](#).
 - Check out [TXS4DEI Lege Advocacy Toolkit](#) for more information on SB 17 and the hearing.
 - If you cannot attend in person, please [submit a written testimony here](#). [Watch the livestream here](#).
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Background: SB 17 Overcompliance:

- What's happened?
 - [In spring of 2023, Senate Bill 17 passed on party lines](#). The law went into effect on January 1st, 2024. This is part of a national, conservative movement to remove DEI practices from higher education institutions. This is an attack on free speech, public education, and workers, primarily educators.
 - Recently, public universities across Texas have fired staff members related to former DEI programs. During the [SB 17](#) hearings on the House Floor last spring, Rep. Kuempel said no staff would lose their jobs. Yet, many of those fired were formerly DEI workers.
 - Who is pushing this anti-DEI, anti-education agenda?
 - Sen. Brandon Creighton is the author of SB 17 and the Chairman of this Subcommittee. His actions and words have contributed to a climate of fear.
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Below is a list of questions to help prepare your testimony:

1. How is DEI fundamentally tied to the quality of your educational experience? In our post-SB 17 climate, would you have chosen a Texas university, and what would you tell students applying for college?
2. How has the loss of DEI personnel and offices impacted your educational experience? How have you and your peers been forced to step up to fill educational and programmatic gaps that universities left behind after SB 17, and is that sustainable?
3. Have you felt discouraged from applying for student opportunities on account of your race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin? Have you experienced an increase in microaggressions or have you seen a lack of cultural understanding since the DEI training ban?
4. Have faculty and staff communicated to you that certain programs and opportunities are ending because of SB 17? Have staff and faculty you've worked with been fired or targeted for their previous DEI affiliations?
5. Do you believe chancellors are qualified to discuss student experiences in this area and to discuss what contributes to student success, as opposed to input from staff, faculty, and students?



Sample Written Testimony:

[FIRST & LAST NAME]

Regarding the Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education

[May XX, 2024]

Good afternoon, my name is [FIRST & LAST NAME] and I am a concerned student [OR ANY OTHER APPLICABLE IDENTITIES TO SHARE] from [CITY, TEXAS].

I am here today because I am deeply disturbed by the developments at Texas public higher education institutions regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) hiring practices and fostering environments. My education/My students' education(s) has/have suffered because opportunities for student success, which complied with SB 17, have been eliminated with swift action out of fear of retaliation from our own lawmakers.

[Tell them your story, why you are testifying.]

[Tell them how they can help, like below:]

Everyone in Texas deserves access to affordable, quality higher education. Part of that mission must include DEI initiatives and practices, which help facilitate meaningful learning environments to equip students like me with the academic, social, and emotional skills we need to navigate the world beyond higher education.

We're asking for a complete reversal of SB 17, which is a reasonable request considering the sprawling impacts that developed from its vague nature. The new law is unclear, and it's causing universities to go above and beyond despite not breaking any rules.

Let's concentrate on making sure students can access inclusive education, have special graduation ceremonies, keep getting financial help, and ensure our teachers feel secure in their jobs. We have some of the top universities in the nation, staffed by excellent teachers, and overcompliance is threatening their jobs, campus communities, and our education. We must protect higher education and keep it a place of freedom for everyone.

It's time to keep the promise of a bright future for our educators, just as much as the children they serve.

[Tell them thank you for their time and solicitation of public input, like below:]

Thank you for reading/listening. I hope you consider this testimony and provide an outlet for quality, inclusive education in Texas.
