

Dear Legislator,

The undersigned organizations write to draw your attention to proposed language in Michigan House Bill 5370 that would curtail academic freedom at any publicly funded university.

Language proposed by the House appropriations committee would prevent universities that receive public funds from collaborating with any non-profit organization that publicly criticizes any Michigan business. The language is a ham-fisted response to the concerns of one business in Southeastern Michigan whose practices were criticized by a non-profit organization while a student was serving as an intern at that non-profit.

Sec. 273a. It is the intent of the legislature that a public university that receives funds in section 236 shall not collaborate in any manner with a nonprofit worker center whose documented activities include coercion through protest, demonstration, or organization against a Michigan business.

The proposed language is so broad that it could potentially prevent public universities from forming partnerships or placing students with virtually any civic, religious, or other non-profit organization that engages in public outreach. It represents direct interference by the legislature in the university curriculum, and thereby curtails the academic freedom of the universities, their faculty members, and students.

Academic freedom is essential to the mission of the academy, and at times this can lead to ideas that can be uncomfortable for interest groups with differing viewpoints. The mission of the academy must remain independent of any particular interest group.

We are concerned that the current proposal would have a broad impact and may lead to further efforts to undermine academic freedom. We hope you will join us in seeking to preserve the independence of Michigan's public university system.

We ask that you strike Sec. 273a from House Bill 5370 when it comes to the Senate.

Sincerely,

Individual titles and organizational affiliations are provided for identification purposes only