



Tony Evers

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 8, 2022

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing Assembly Bill 885 in its entirety.

This bill eliminates statutory immunity for University of Wisconsin System ("System") or Wisconsin Technical College System ("WTCS") district board campus administrators from liability for violations of certain individual expressive rights on system or technical college campuses. The bill allows for the recovery of reasonable attorney fees and costs by a prevailing plaintiff.

I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because the System already has policies and practices in place reflecting its obligations under the extensive body of caselaw defining First Amendment rights and exceptions and providing protections and remedies in case of a violation. According to the System, no case has been brought forward in Wisconsin in which a System or WTCS district employee was found to have violated the expressive rights of another individual under the state constitution. This demonstrates first and foremost how seriously Wisconsin's higher education institutions already take academic freedom and freedom of expression. It also underscores that existing state law and policies already sufficiently address the concerns this bill raises.

This legislation, like several bills before me, represents yet another attempt by this Legislature to politicize our campuses and higher education institutions. Our students and our world-class higher education institutions would be much better suited if this Legislature instead meaningfully considered efforts to invest in students and education at every level, and I welcome the opportunity to engage in this important conversation and do what's best for our kids.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Evers".

Tony Evers
Governor