

Dear _____,

"I propose to remove the shackles from higher education and give them the flexibility to compete and succeed. We cannot stifle productivity and efficiency and then expect our colleges and universities to meet the challenges of the 21st Century." In 2005, then-Governor Joe Manchin forcefully expressed his vision for higher education in West Virginia. By contrast, in 2011, the West Virginia state legislature passed Senate Bill 330 that takes administrative control of critical personnel decisions away from institutions of higher education and their governing boards, and instead places that authority directly in the hands of the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC).

Through diligence and hard work, WVU has flourished with the increased flexibility passed by the legislature in 2005. By most measures, we have succeeded beyond expectations. We have (1) set enrollment records, and raised graduation and retention rates, (2) raised the SAT and ACT scores of our incoming classes, (3) reaccredited numerous programs, (4) received clean financial audits, and (5) achieved record-breaking fundraising and research funding.

It is clear that WVU is living up to its "social contract" with the state of West Virginia: with flexibility restored, WVU will continue to serve the state by becoming a more competitive and more successful university. We all love our university, and we take seriously the call to serve our state and its people.

We understand that Senate Bill 330 was passed in an effort to help address equity issues relating to compensation of employees, both classified and non-classified, in institutions of higher learning. In the abstract, this goal is laudable. In fact, we would like to note that WVU has made significant progress in implementing a human resources system that emphasizes consistency, transparency, and fairness. We have developed a rational compensation strategy for *all* our employees—already addressing much of the rationale behind Senate Bill 330.

However, we fear that, instead of promoting fairness, the application of some of the provisions of Senate Bill 330 will stifle our ability to be the best university we can possibly be for West Virginia. Much of our administrative and fiscal flexibility—and thus our ability to compete and succeed nationally and globally—is at risk because of "Senate Bill 330." The law adds new unnecessary burdens in terms of time, money, and effort at a time when higher education has suffered budget cuts. Full implementation of the law will inevitably lead to increases in tuition, and will impact our teaching, research, and service missions

Finally, we must note that the very people the law was designed to help—WVU employees—faculty, classified staff, and non-classified staff, as well as students, alumni, and parents, are united in their opposition to various sections of this law, recognizing them as a serious threat to institutional autonomy and viability. The budget cuts to higher education, while threatening and dangerous, are no longer our only concern; we can no longer wait and hope for the least damaging interpretation and implementation of these sections of the law that was Senate Bill 330. **As a united family of Mountaineers, we believe there are better ways to address the goals of Senate Bill 330. We hereby ask that the WV Legislature revisit Senate Bill 330 and allow institutions of higher education to regain control of managing their own personnel.**

Sincerely,