

Testimony of Erin Price
supporting
HOUSE BILL NO. 1537
House Judiciary Committee
February 7, 2023

Chairman Klemin and members of the committee, thank you for taking my testimony into consideration today.

My name is Erin Price, and I am an Associate Professor of English at Bismarck State College. It is my honor to also be the faculty advisor for BSC's LGBT+ Club. I am submitting testimony to you today on behalf of myself and the Club members of Bismarck State College – many of whom were too scared to write to you themselves. They did not want their names on official testimony for fear of retribution from family, friends, and strangers.

These incredibly talented, kind, funny, full-of-promise students live with this fear in the back of their minds constantly – just because they want to live authentically. I assure you; they are not fearful due to paranoia. I have been teaching since 2006 and many (too many) of my students at BSC have confided in me that they have been targets of hate crimes – all too often they feel unsupported in even reporting these events. They are marginalized and underrepresented and unsupported in too many ways.

Please do the right thing and show your support for HB 1357. This bill adds a very necessary hate crime element to the underlying crimes of Aggravated Assault, Harassment, and Criminal Mischief. There is also a section addressing required law enforcement training in identifying and responding to bias crimes and a reporting requirement, which would ensure an accurate assessment of the problem.

I am urging you to support HB 1357. Let's show these students that their health and safety – that they themselves – are worth protecting.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully,

Erin Price
Associate Professor of English
Faculty Advisor, LGBT+ Club
Bismarck State College