

I am a tenured professor in North Dakota but I am submitting this testimony personally as a private citizen and my views in no way are meant to represent those of the university.

Becoming a professor is an extremely risky enterprise. One typically dedicates one's life to five to seven years of intensive study to earn a doctorate, having already completed an undergraduate and possibly a Master's degree. For scientists and members of other disciplines as well, the academic path is even riskier, often requiring two to four years of postdoctoral research in order to be competitive for the few tenure-track positions available. The economic opportunity costs of this career path are consequently enormous. And in my field, I could earn considerably more (twice as much in fact) by moving academia to industry.

North Dakota benefits directly from the tenure system, by being able to recruit talented applicants willing to forgo the economic opportunities offered by industry in exchange for job security. Professors work extremely hard for tenure, and continue to work hard long after. Focusing on the possible negative effects of tenure is extremely misguided. Tenure is a powerful tool that states use to attract the talent that will educate their professional employees of the future and provide the innovative research that allows states to move forward economically.

This bill presupposes that fear is a motivating factor, that the threat of job loss is what motivates strong performance. Nothing could be further from the truth. Faculty who are innovators, who provide the education and research that move us forward as a society, are not motivated by fear; they are motivated by their desire to make the world a better place and play a role in advances in knowledge. Without the job security that tenure provides, the best and brightest of your faculty will leave for industry and for university systems that recognize and maintain its value. North Dakota could then face the very real threat that this bill proposes to address, a faculty fed with fear, composed of those who know they can't succeed elsewhere, which is not a faculty prepared to take the risks that move us forward as a society and as an economy.