

March 12, 2023
District 12 Resident Opposition to HB1446

Dear Chairman Schauer & Members of the Committee,

I urge you to consider the perspectives outlined in the testimonies of numerous university faculty and higher education policy experts. Please oppose HB1446. I am writing as neither faculty nor policy expert; I am simply a resident concerned about this bill. My experience as a student in college and graduate school gave me a glimpse into the tenure process and an appreciation for the many roles a faculty member plays in an academic department. My experience as a young professional who moved to North Dakota for a job in science and natural resources means I am **hyper-aware of policies that could deter employee recruitment.**

With a spirit of dialogue not personal attack, I want to respond directly to Representative Lefor's motivation for this bill, first as quoted in an article by Ryan Quinn in Higher Ed¹, Rep. Lefor notes this bill will make "tenured professors accountable, just like anyone else." When I read this I thought, they *are accountable* to their peers and to their department and to their university academic affairs leaders, and likely others. Committee members, please consider the testimonies before you; these indicate there are already policies in place to hold tenured professors accountable. Are they perfect? Very likely not. **Should we pilot a program in which an executive (University President) essentially gets unlimited power to review and terminate an employee's (Professor's) job? Absolutely not.**

Second, in the article by Ryan Quinn in Higher Ed¹, Rep. Lefor references the private sector and how there a person is "accountable to a boss." This point always grinds my gears, once again no personal animosity toward Rep. Lefor, as I have heard this refrain from many others who say public institutions need to be more like businesses. I appreciate that public spaces are different from businesses in some ways! I value the **more "horizontal structure" of leadership and accountability that exist in many academic departments**, and I trust a **diverse group of a faculty's peers to assess the nuances and unique metrics of their "job performance."** Once again, is there room for improvement in the current system? Yes. Can the current system be taken advantage of? Likely yes. Does HB 1446 adequately offer improvements to the current system? No.

I agree with Rep. Lefor's testimony² in which he notes there are challenges our state's universities face when aligning with polytechnic academies and improving access to online courses. **I agree elected officials should be stewards of the tax dollars and that public universities will need to adapt to be competitive in a changing market of education and job training.** So it worries me this committee and senate would consider passing HB1446; This is a bill that has a high potential to deter the recruitment and retention of quality educators, caring mentors, innovative researchers, and engaged community members.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Olivia Johnson
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District 12

¹<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/01/26/bill-north-dakota-presidents-could-fire-tenured-faculty>; ²https://www.ndlegis.gov/assembly/68-2023/testimony/HGVA-1446-20230203-19028-F-LEFOR_MIKE.pdf