

Testimony in Opposition to HB1446

Honorable Chairman Elkin, Vice Chairman Beard, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am an Assistant Professor of History and current President of the Faculty Senate at Bismarck State College. Our faculty senate passed a statement of opposition to HB1446 in February which I delivered in-person before the House committee, but due to the timing of the hearing, today I deliver testimony on my personal behalf.

As a member of the Faculty Senate I have yet to hear from a faculty member who supports this bill and all the feedback my fellow faculty senators and I have received has been vehemently negative toward it. Both faculty and staff have also expressed some bewilderment as to why BSC was included in this pilot program, when little affected by this bill has been any point of contention on campus in recent memory. It seems as if we are unwillingly becoming part of someone else's experiment without our buy-in.

In any case, the many I have spoken with generally agree that this bill effectively strips us of tenure's main protections and would set the stage for potential overstepping of presidential power that endangers our mission as educators. Faculty understand well that our positions are not permanent and that we are not "un-fireable," as is sometimes popularly depicted, and we strive to maintain rigorous standards set by institutional and SBHE policies (See SBHE 605.1, 605.3).

Moreover, faculty are already held accountable both by college administration as well as by other faculty. In any such a case where a faculty member were not fulfilling duties as they relate to policy, teaching, or administrative tasks, it is other faculty that immediately take on the leftover burden, or deal with the fallout. It is thus in our own best interest to assure that we are all fulfilling our duties, and we do this effectively.

For example, recently at BSC it was discussed among faculty that there was disparity in the number of students assigned to different faculty for academic advising, and that some faculty were thus spending far more time on academic advising than others. At BSC, students are normally assigned faculty advisors within their declared programs, and some programs simply have more students in them. Nevertheless, many faculty--even some with small advising loads--felt this was unfair. The Faculty Senate took up the issue and revised workload policy with stated aims at more equity among faculty advising loads; we then asked administration to offer training in advising outside our immediate subject areas, so those with few advisees could take on more. This has been a faculty-led effort at accountability supported by our administrative partners.

HB1446 endangers this kind of working relationship that allows a school like BSC to thrive. Shared governance is important in building effective relationships amongst faculty, between faculty and support staff, and between faculty and administration. BSC has a wide range of programs, ranging from Industrial Automation to Art, to Energy Management, to Theater. No college president or administrator can be an expert on the needs of every program on campus, nor is the vision for the college cast by the president alone. The individual faculty members who come with extensive training, interact with students on a daily basis, and dedicate their lives to

building and expanding programs at BSC, must be able to come to the table with administration and speak freely about what students and programs need. **This bill harms this process by allowing the potential for personal quibbles or political conflicts to dominate this relationship.**

College faculty are hardworking educators, program builders, and industry experts. Tenure allows us to maximize our potential in working with our administrative partners in building programs that will assure tomorrow's North Dakota workforce is competent, innovative, and effective in a highly competitive economy. Please do not endanger it.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity,

David Terry
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