

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

I am a resident of North Dakota, a parent of two children (one in high school, the other in junior high), and an Associate Professor at UND.

I am writing to you today as an individual citizen to ask that you DO NOT PASS SB 2247 relating to the discussion of divisive concepts in institutions of higher education.

One of the goals of higher education is to help students develop the skills necessary to consider a wide range of viewpoints when constructing their own position on matters. Understanding diverse viewpoints is critical for developing sound arguments and articulating one's views. As a professor I never tell my students what to think, but rather provide them with opportunities to grapple with the many sides of complex and difficult topics. In higher education we don't run away from concepts that are difficult because discussing topics that are controversial or challenging helps students learn to develop their own voice.

Beyond the walls of the classroom though, our Democracy requires free speech and an informed citizenry with the ability to tolerate ideas that we may not always agree with. As a parent, I often explain to my own children that even when we do not agree with an idea or someone, it is good to work to understand the idea/person as this helps us understand the world around us and work with others.

In addition, I believe that because SB 2247 would prohibit the discussion of certain complex and controversial topics, it would violate current laws and policies including [NDCC Chapter 15-10.4](#) (Campus Free Speech policy) and [SBHE Policy 401.1](#) (on Academic Freedom) which both affirm the importance of free speech and the consideration of diverse ideas for the proper functioning of universities. I am also concerned that this legislation poses a threat to continued institutional and program accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission and other accrediting bodies.

I also worry that this legislation will make it more difficult to recruit and retain faculty and instructors at our institutions of higher education, which are critical for meeting the workforce needs of the state of North Dakota.

I know that you value free speech. We must not trample on a core value of our Democracy simply because we do not agree with a particular idea. Doing so puts our Democracy at risk.

Please DO NOT PASS SB 2247.

Sincerely,

Liz Legerski