HB 1516
House Education Committee
Feb. 11, 2025
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Chair Heinert and members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Linnell, and I am the Director of University Communications at Minot State University. I also serve on the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) as the Staff Advisor, a non-voting member of the Board. I am writing in support of HB 1516 as an individual who has a position similar to what is proposed in HB 1516, and I believe it is valuable for educational professionals to have a formal voice on the respective school board. This testimony is not on behalf of the ND State Board of Higher Education.

The role of the Staff Advisor is beneficial for both the board I serve on and the employees within the North Dakota University System (NDUS) I represent. While I do not have a vote for formal positions, policy-making, or procedures, this position offers advice and insight to the board on behalf of all classified staff in the system. I solicit information and insight monthly from all 11 NDUS schools during State Staff Senate meetings and work with individuals on State Staff Senate's Executive Board to help better inform SBHE members of the day-to-day operations. The position also allows for communication to work both ways, informing State Staff Senate of changes and updates that come from SBHE meetings and the rationale behind such moves.

I believe this position helps develop a better relationship between staff members and the SBHE. As a non-voting member, it removes any conflict of interest that could arise with policy and procedural changes and helps align those changes with what is in the best interest of staff among the NDUS. I believe this representation is vital for both NDUS employees and the SBHE.

For these reasons, I support HB 1516 and encourage the committee to support a Do Pass recommendation on this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted:

Michael Linnell