

North Dakota House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
North Dakota Legislative Assembly
600 E Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505

February 5, 2025

Dear Chair Schauer and Members of Government and Veterans Affairs:

I write **in opposition to House Bill No. 1437** – a bill relating to the prohibition of academic tenure at two-year colleges. This bill is unnecessary, harmful to our higher education institutions, threatens the quality of education available to North Dakota students, and would deter future scholars and innovative minds from coming to North Dakota.

I am a tenured professor of sociology at North Dakota State University (NDSU). The following testimony reflects my knowledge, experience, and opinions as a citizen of North Dakota and public employee in the NDUS system since August of 2005 and in no way reflects the opinions of my employer, NDSU.

Tenure is not a job security measure—it is a safeguard for academic freedom and a tool for attracting and retaining high-quality educators and researchers. By removing tenure, HB 1437 would create a chilling effect on the ability of faculty to thoroughly educate students and conduct research without fear of political or administrative retaliation. Academic freedom is essential to ensuring that North Dakota’s students receive a rigorous, well-rounded education that prepares them for the workforce and civic life.

I am *deeply concerned* about the impact this bill will have on my current and prospective colleagues at 2-year colleges, as well as on the reputation of North Dakota’s higher educational system. The passage of HB 1437 would weaken North Dakota’s ability to compete for top-tier faculty. Community colleges play a critical role in workforce development, and removing tenure protections will make it harder to recruit and retain the best educators for these institutions. Weakening the foundation of our community colleges ultimately harms our entire university system and will leave many potential educators and innovators overlooking our state as a place where they can find a home.

Tenure is not something that just happens and it is not a free pass that means I can never be fired. Tenure is earned and we continue to be evaluated each year after tenure. Typically, it takes six years to earn tenure, which up until then one can be

released for not performing adequately in the areas of teaching, research, and service. Over my time at NDSU, I have witnessed a variety of people in different departments be denied tenure for not performing at the level they need and subsequently were released from positions.

In addition, tenure does *not* mean you cannot be fired for just cause based upon poor performance, academic misconduct, exigency, and other valid reasons. I have witnessed tenured faculty be terminated for those reasons over my time at NDSU.

Tenure is a rigorous process and over my time serving on tenure committees and evaluating faculty, I have witnessed a range of faculty and skills. The common features of people who pass tenure are passionate about their fields, engage in quality research that contributes to the land grant mission of NDSU, and have an overwhelming dedication to educating future generations of scholars, teachers, business-owners, public service employees, engineers, nurses, architects (I can go on and on here), neighbors, and citizens.

North Dakota should be focused on strengthening our higher education institutions, not dismantling the very structures that allow them to thrive. I urge you to give HB 1437 a DO NOT PASS and stand in support of our educators, students, and the future of higher education in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony, and your service to the State of North Dakota.

Sincerely,
Dr. Christina Weber, PhD
Professor of Sociology, NDSU
District 27 - Fargo, ND