

Dear Legislators and Committee members,

I am writing as an individual citizen in opposition to HB 1437. As a tenured professor myself, I ask that you please oppose HB 1437 as well, as it would ban tenure at North Dakota's two-year colleges for new faculty. This bill is based on misconceptions about faculty jobs and review processes and simply unnecessary. It is also harmful to our higher education institutions, reducing the competitiveness of our two-year colleges. As a result, it also threatens the quality of education available to North Dakota students by contributing to high turnover.

Tenure does not mean faculty are not reviewed regularly and cannot be dismissed. But it does safeguard academic freedom and is a critically important tool for attracting and retaining high-quality educators who could make significantly more in the private sector based on their educational credentials. In addition, by removing tenure, HB 1437 would have a substantial chilling effect on the ability of faculty to educate students and conduct research without fear of political or administrative retaliation. This contributes to an environment that will make faculty want to leave ND and also undermines efforts to recruit new faculty. 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. This is true for both research intensive universities as well as community colleges.

Moreover, 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. These sorts of bills ultimately harm our entire university system and the reputation of higher education in North Dakota.

In short, this bill is a solution in search of a problem - procedures for evaluating and dismissing faculty already exist. If we want to remain competitive, North Dakota should be focused on strengthening our higher education institutions, not dismantling the very structures that allow them to thrive. For these and other reasons, I urge you to give HB 1437 a DO NOT PASS.

Please stand in support of our educators, students, and the future of higher education in our state.

Best regards,

Liz Legerski
Grand Forks, ND