

Good morning, Chair Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Mike Lefor, and I represent District 37 - Dickinson in the House of Representatives.

Today, I am here in support of HB 1437 which provides a commonsense approach and road map to post tenure review within our university system. The bill states that the institutions under the control of the state board of higher education which offers faculty academic tenure to develop and adopt a policy which provides for defining the progression and advancement criteria at each stage of tenure progression, including post tenure review.

The bill further defines post tenure evaluations which must occur within the first three years. After that, every five years. Further, it establishes a procedure for an annual evaluation of all non-tenure, tenure-track and tenured faculty.

Tenure, in some cases, can create an environment where professors feel secure in their position even when they might not be meeting the expectations of the institution. This could reduce the tendency for some faculty to become disengaged or complacent over time, as they would always have to prove their worth through student success and other criteria.

I want to highlight the critical role post-tenure review plays in advancing the quality of education for our students. Tenure is utilized to provide a long-term commitment; however, our ultimate responsibility is to our students - their growth, their learning and their success.

Post-tenure review ensures that even after achieving tenure, our faculties continue to grow as professionals, refining teaching methods and staying current in their fields. It holds them accountable to the ever-evolving educational landscape, allowing us to adapt to new technologies, research findings, and the needs of our students.

The process is not about scrutinizing or undermining tenure, it's about embracing a culture of continuous improvement. Through regular, constructive feedback, post-tenure review helps to identify opportunities for professional development.

Ultimately, it ensures we as a state are providing the highest-quality learning experiences for our students.

When we maintain a commitment to excellence beyond tenure, we model the very principles of lifelong learning that we encourage in our students. By embracing post-tenure review, we reaffirm our dedication to their futures and uphold the integrity of our institutions.

As the competition for students continues to grow, our universities are going to have to have a great deal of flexibility and accountability in order to successfully recruit and retain students in the future. The citizens of our great state deserve no less than the very best our institutions have to offer, and HB 1437 is a commonsense solution to provide both the best our professional staff have to offer and guidance where needed.

I ask your committee to consider a "do pass" recommendation and thank you for your consideration.