

Dear Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

I write to you on behalf of the NDSU Faculty Senate of which I serve as the President.

Faculty have raised serious concerns about HB 1161 and we encourage a **do not pass** recommendation.

I wish to share with you some of the concerns from a faculty perspective related to hiring processes and instructional implications.

First, there is a rhythm to the faculty hiring timeline for faculty higher education. Mid-August is the start for the NDUS academic calendar. Faculty contracts for full-time instructional faculty are mid-August – mid-May. Summer session instruction is offered as a separate contract for faculty offered as a course-by-course basis for institution needs. Hiring of faculty, largely regardless of the discipline, is finalized during a spring semester for starting in mid-August. This timing coincides with recruitment for the best talent as students are approaching spring graduation with advanced degrees, or faculty are looking to move into advanced positions or specialty areas that maybe offered at NDSU. We are screening applicants in late fall, conducting interviews in early spring, and making offers in mid-late spring. Outside of this cycle, and an institution is reducing the pool of potential applicants. A December deadline, as described in this bill, will have positions that appear open as active searches to fill them are ongoing.

There are times when a position does open mid-year; in those situations, the salary that is appropriated for that position is used to hire a temporary adjunct instructor to ensure there is no disruption in course offering for students. The search for the full-time faculty member would initiate on the cycle shared above. Thus, while it may look like an open position is sitting vacant, those funds are being used to both hire in the short-term and search for the long-term replacement to fill the line. The need to request the hiring of temporary positions or to extend the time to make an offer will result in delays that will lead to lost candidates.

Second, the appropriated funding received is to ensure the institution can quickly and adeptly meet the needs of the institution. Funds from an open line may need to be used to support temporary hires in multiple areas of growth as the institution responds to the changing demographics of students. The loss of this flexibility will lead to direct impacts on students access to courses and timely degree completion in areas where turnover is happening. The unintended consequence is delay in entering the workforce.

NDSU faculty recognize the importance of accountability and responsible stewardship of resources. One example is the data-driven approach for minimum course sizes and that ensures resources are allocated efficiently, prioritizing high-demand courses and programs. Through our collaborative efforts of advising, course planning, and registration priorities, we have

implemented course demand software, powered by artificial intelligence, to predict exactly how many course sections and seats are needed each semester, eliminating guesswork and inefficiencies. These tools allow us to maximize our instructional resources and ensure students receive the education they need in the most cost-effective way possible. This also relies upon flexible allocations of resources for instructional staff as course demands fluctuate.

Finally, this legislation seems to be counter to other legislation proposed and advancing this session. HB 1220 is seeking to accelerate the rate of degree completion and HB 1437 is seeking to alter the conditions of faculty hiring and increasing administrative oversight while this bill seeks to remove the institutions funding that is needed to address the needs of those other potential pieces of legislation.

As proposed, we encourage a do not pass on HB 1161 to allow not only NDSU, but all institutions to be able to meet the instructional needs as quickly and effectively as possible.

Lisa