



Office of the President

To: Senate Appropriations Committee

From: Dr. Bernell Hirning, President-WSC

Date: March 17, 2025

Subject: Testimony on HB1161

Greetings! I am writing today in opposition of HB1161, related to funding for newly created FTE positions at institutions of higher education.

There are a number of unique aspects of higher education that make it distinctly different from other State of ND agencies in filling positions. One aspect is the nature of the 'semester' format in higher education, which makes filling faculty positions difficult outside of the normal 'seasonal' format that is higher education. The most opportune time to fill a faculty position would be around the midpoint of the Spring Semester as that's when most faculty are seeking new positions to best fit with the start of the Fall Semester. If by chance, a faculty position becomes vacant in the summer or fall of the year, very few faculty are on the market at that time.

Additionally, unique to Williston State College, doing business in the heart of oil and gas country makes it very difficult especially on the staff side to fill positions. For example, recently when there was an opening for a human resources director at Williston it took over a year to fill the position due to the competition between the college and the companies in the oil and gas industry. Therefore, placing timelines on filling positions when we are in an aggressive competition with oil and gas companies would make it difficult to have stability in the workforce at Williston State College.

In conclusion, WSC asks for a Do Not Pass on HB1161 to allow WSC and other NDUS institutions to continue fulfilling their missions to provide quality education, student success, fulfillment of workforce needs and allow the operational flexibility required by our educational institutions.

Bernell Hirning, PhD
President-Williston State College