

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Amber Vibeto, and I reside in District 3. I want to thank the sponsors of this bill for bringing forth a piece of legislation that would increase the level of education freedom that we currently have in North Dakota. However, I believe that we can do much better than what this bill provides. I believe House Bill 1532 misses a big opportunity to provide education choice for all ND students, not just those who have access and have been accepted to a private school. The school choice movement has exploded over the last few years and there has never been stronger public approval for the concept of funding students rather than continuing to fund a broken system.

As with any bill being proposed, the question must be asked: What problem are we trying to solve? Could private school families benefit from partial tuition reimbursement? Absolutely. Contrary to popular opinion, not everyone who sends their kids to private school is wealthy. For many families, it is a great sacrifice. But House Bill 1532 fails to address why these parents would choose an alternative to public education in the first place. It ignores the main problem: our education system is broken. A year before students are set to graduate, [less than half](#) of ND 11th graders are proficient in English Language, and a whopping 67% of them are not proficient in math. The current system is failing to equip the majority of students in North Dakota. Fortunately, we don't have to keep doing things the way we always have. We don't have to continue to rearrange the deck chairs on a sinking ship. We can board a new ship and save all students, not just those who have access to first class, so to speak.

I'd like to share just a few examples of the exciting educational reforms that are happening across the country.

[Arizona's](#) Educational Savings Account program provides participating families over \$6,500 per year per child for private school, homeschooling, micro-schools, tutoring, or any other form of education provided outside of a traditional public school system.

[Utah](#) created a state-funded scholarship program that provides students with \$8,000 in state funds that can be used toward private school tuition and other education-related expenses.

[West Virginia's](#) educational savings account gives families \$4,300 per child per year, which is 100% of the state portion of the education funding formula. Families can use these dollars to pay for private school tuition, therapies, and a wide variety of other education expenses.

The vast majority of [credible evidence](#) shows that school choice programs improve academic outcomes for not only the program participants, but also the students in

public schools. Teachers benefit, too. 5 studies have [found](#) that private and charter school competition leads to higher teacher salaries in public schools. School choice leads to competition. Competition leads to excellence. Excellence leads to success.

House Bill 1532 focuses on helping a small percentage of students and ignores the vast majority of students who are stuck in a failing system and have no other option but to remain. This bill adds an additional \$24 million taxpayer dollars allotted for education when we could actually save money by implementing universal school choice while [improving academic proficiency](#). There are currently [28 studies](#) that have examined the financial impact of school choice for the taxpayers and public schools:

- 25 found that school choice programs save taxpayers money
- 3 found that school choice programs are revenue neutral
- None found that school choice programs have a negative fiscal impact

North Dakota is full of wonderful educators and hard-working students. Unfortunately, most are stuck in an antiquated and one-size-fits-all system that no longer works. Continuing to throw money at the problem is clearly ineffective and, if we're being honest, lazy. We can do better. [American Federation for Children](#) offers high-quality model legislation for every kind of school choice program, and it's my hope that North Dakota will eventually implement a program that will empower all families to choose the education providers that best meet their needs. I have no doubt that House Bill 1532 is well-intentioned, but I believe that it's short-sighted, fails to solve the real issue, and spends money we don't need to spend. Therefore, I ask for a 'do not pass' recommendation.

Thank you for your time.

Resources:

[School Choice Myths](#)

[Research Shows Favorable Impact of Private School Choice](#)

[Why Rural Schools Need School Choice](#)

[The Little Red Schoolhouse Could Do With a Little Competition](#)

[Rerouting the Myths of Rural Education Choice](#)

[Two States Now Have Universal School Choice — And Yours Could Be Next](#)

[The Education Savings Account Act](#)

[Great Schools Tax Credit Act](#)

[Parental Choice Scholarship Program Act – Means-Tested Eligibility](#)

[Parental Choice Scholarship Program Act – Universal Eligibility](#)

[Foster Child Scholarship Program Act](#)

