

**HB 1532 Testimony**  
**Education Committee**  
**Gerald Vetter, President, Light of Christ Catholic Schools**  
**February 1, 2023**

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

I thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 1532.

My name is Gerald Vetter and I serve as the president for the North Dakota State Association of Non-public Schools. There are approximately 7,700 non-public students in North Dakota, which is 6% of all North Dakota students prek- grade 12.

I also serve as the president of Light of Christ Catholic Schools here in Bismarck. Our five schools educate 1,432 students. Our approximately 850 families are integral partners within our school community and are privileged in being the primary teachers of their children. (42)

Historically, the St. Mary's Academy and Boarding School was the first Catholic school in this region, dating back to 1878, just five years after the railroad reached the Missouri. (10)  
I am the product of both public and private schools. My parents and dedicated educators instilled within me a great respect and admiration for North Dakota schools, educators and a passion for student learning.

HB 1532 would offer a welcomed educational reimbursement to our North Dakota families. In covering a modest portion of the actual cost to educate their child this would assist families to attend the school most aligned to their ideological beliefs and ultimately deemed the best fit for each child. Thereby, lessening the challenges that may restrict them and the sacrifices being made to attend a non-public school and assuring the right that each child will be receiving a quality education.

Speaking on-behalf of the students and families of Light of Christ Catholic Schools, they appreciate calling this state their home. After our students receive their approved ND diplomas, nine of 10 graduates then decide to attend one of our ND private or public colleges or universities. During the course of their higher education and beyond, they regularly seek employment in their state becoming generous citizens, parents and taxpayers helping to support the common good of their local communities and state. HB 1532 is an investment in the families of North Dakota. Thank you for your work and consideration.

On-behalf of the State Association of Non-Public schools, we are committed to continuous improvement and statutory compliance of all school approval requirements, post-secondary and workforce preparedness, support for social emotional concerns and providing safe and secure school environments. These intentional efforts are implemented with fidelity, while still honoring and preserving a distinctive living mission that each institution was founded upon.

Thank you for your work and consideration.

I ask for your support of House Bill 1532.