

Written Testimony in support of HB1281

Senator Bell and members of the Finance and Taxation Committee:

My name is Amy Gieser and I reside in district 33. I am a mother of 8 children and have been homeschooling for 13 years. I am testifying in support of Bill HB1281 which would provide a \$500 tax credit per student per year for non-public and homeschool students.

At present, homeschooling may be the fastest growing form of education in the United States. The homeschool population has been growing at an estimated 2% -8% per year over the past several years but grew drastically from 2019-2020. There were about 2.5 million homeschool students in the spring of 2019 and there are now an estimated 4-5 million students in grades K-12.

Nationwide, taxpayers spend an average of \$14,270 per pupil annually in public schools, plus capital expenditures. Today's roughly 4.5 million homeschool students represent a savings of over \$65 billion. Taxpayers spend nothing on most homeschool students whereas families spend an average of \$600 per student per year for their education. Homeschooling families also typically carry the added burden of living on a single wage in order for one parent to dedicate their time in teaching the children.

My own personal experience has always been that of planning and saving carefully to cover the cost of homeschooling my family. We must often do without newer and better curriculum and other tools that would greatly aid in my children's education. Extra-curricular activities are very limited due to cost. Yet despite all the sacrifices we make in this regard and going without a lot of the amenities afforded to public school children we have never regretted our decision to homeschool. Our family has benefited greatly from it. Yes there are stories of homeschool failures out there but 99% of the homeschooling families I have known over the years are responsible and dedicated to the education of their children. It is not an easy way of life, but it is very rewarding.

America has always been known for its diversity and innovative approaches to all areas of life and education is no exception. While public schools educate the vast majority of students, we should still be striving to provide for and encourage alternatives. The needs of families and children vary greatly. Society, families and especially the children all reap the benefits of this diversity.

In conclusion, I believe tax relief for homeschooling and other nonpublic schooling families will greatly aid their pursuit to educate their children to the best of their abilities and thereby raise responsible and outstanding citizens for North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Mrs. Amy Gieser