



NDSBA
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HB 1281
Testimony of Amy DeKok
Senate Finance & Taxation Committee
March 9, 2021

Madame Chair Bell and members of the committee, my name is Amy DeKok. I am in-house Legal Counsel for the North Dakota School Boards Association. NDSBA represents all 178 North Dakota public school districts and their boards. NDSBA stands firmly in opposition to HB 1281.

Article VIII, Section 2 of our state constitution very specifically states that the Legislative Assembly shall provide for a uniform system of free public schools throughout the state. The ND Constitution does not include any provision for the financial support of private or home education. In fact, it explicitly states that no money raised for the support of public schools of the state shall be appropriated to or used for the support of any sectarian school. While this bill does not direct state fund towards non-public education exactly, it does ensure the state collects less in order to support non-public education.

Continuously, public school districts, their administrators and their staff are asked to do more with less. Costs associated with behavioral health, safety, staff benefits, social services, etc. continue to rise. So much so that we spent another interim studying our state's education funding formula – trying to understand how we could better provide for our public-school system with the same amount of money.

One way I am certain we cannot achieve that goal is to ensure there are less dollars available to input into the formula. While a parent certainly has the right to chose where and how they want their children educated, that choice does not and should not entitle them to the dollars provided for public education by our state constitution. Additionally, home and private schools are not subject to many of the same requirements that public schools are. This is often a reason parents cite in choosing non-public education for their children. However, state dollars, or an exemption from the taxes other citizens are required to pay, should not come without those same requirements.

NDSBA urges a Do Not Pass recommendation on HB 1281, and I would be happy to stand for any questions. Thank you for your time.