

Thank you for your consideration of this bill and the individual needs of ND families the changes this bill represents. My interest in this bill is due to my experience with attempting to enroll my kids in a virtual school at the start of the 2022/23 school year, which went as follows:

I was told about TechTrepAcademy being available to North Dakota students for the first time this year by a friend of mine, who was familiar with the program because she had a sister residing in another state using it and enjoying it. I made some phone calls and did my best to research its integrity and values, and proceeded to enroll my three kids for the upcoming school year. Being it was new to the state, I was the only family in our school district that enrolled. We were approved and the kids' learning schedules were planned out, books were ordered, and classes started.

Note, the program does not offer comprehensive classes or their own curriculum of any sort. Their purpose, rather, is to work alongside the parent as the teacher, and support and guide accordingly. The student's learning progress is reported to and regulated by a certified ND teacher on a weekly basis, and passed or failed accordingly. All of the reporting stressed me out a bit in the beginning, but after becoming routine, I came to really appreciate it... it kept my family's schoolwork on track and was a great filing system for my own record keeping purposes.

My oldest two sons, in 6th grade and 3rd grade, both elected two different virtual classes each. One took a writing class and a math class, the other took a language arts class and a math class. Again, these are not comprehensive but supplemental to the curriculum we use at home. Each class is a one hour, weekly class, and is instructed by a live teacher over zoom call with 10 or so other students. The boys LOVED the classes. It has been so good for them to experience a classroom setting, as well as group thinking with other students. They are assigned homework that they complete each week and digitally turn in, which even my 3rd grader is able to navigate on his own with their user-friendly system. Overall, I have been most thankful for the virtual classes... 100% great experience and profitable for my kids' learning progress.

About a month into the school year, I was notified by TechTrep that they had not yet received the Cost Sharing form (that they had originally received a verbal agreement to) from certain school districts throughout ND, and my school district was one of them. I contacted the superintendent of our Valley City school district and asked if he had received the form to sign. He replied that he had received it, and he and the board decided together to not sign.

I was disappointed to say the least. First off, I wasn't aware originally that to enroll my kids in a virtual school, after homeschooling our entire school life, required the approval of our local superintendent. In the past 7 years of our children's education, we haven't used the Valley City Public School facilities or services. Why it would matter to them what program we were using for education, with no profit or loss to them, was beyond me. Secondly, this virtual school program is a really great concept! We value the option in ND to homeschool and found a program like this to greatly enhance our efforts. I would think officials truly interested in the public's education would welcome such a program. Lastly, it made me feel like I, as the parent, did not have the ultimate authority in deciding what is the best option for my children's education.

In-Home schools, Virtual schools, and Microschools are becoming more common across the country. I would like to see North Dakota advance in their education standards as more concepts are introduced. And, instead of fearing the change that comes with such progression, to welcome it by always looking for ways to improve and enhance our current methods.