

3/14/2023

Dear House of Representatives,

I am writing in opposition to HB 1532.

As a Highly Qualified teacher here in Mandaree, ND and a homeowner who pays taxes and owns a home in another part of ND. I am appalled that this HB 1532 would even be consider taking our public dollars and putting them into private schools. North Dakota's rural communities, served by public schools, will receive absolutely no benefit from this bill as there are no private or parochial nonpublic schools located in 36 of North Dakota's 53 counties. This bill takes resources from the state's 490 public schools in every community across the state to support private schools and private choices, who will hold no accountability for these expenditures. Yet, public schools are governed by locally elected school boards and open meetings laws and must account for every dime they receive from the taxpayers of North Dakota. What is the irony in that?

Leave our public dollars in our public schools where they belong. How can we compare apples to oranges when public schools, esp. those in rural, high poverty areas, don't compare to private schools because they do not face the same issues nor the same problems that public schools face? Private schools choose their students. Public schools don't get to choose students. Public schools, open our doors to students in district and out of district. We teach a diversity of students, including those with special needs and those without special needs and those that are gifted and talented.

Nothing comes free in education. With all of the high expectations that schools and teachers are facing, it's time to take those public monies and use them to invest into schools that are struggling. Many public schools are needing those funds to buy new curriculum, new books, new equipment and the list can go on and on. Instead of trying to take money away from our struggling public schools, why don't we put more money into improving the schools we have. There are so many requirements and hoops to jump through for our public schools and teachers in public schools but having to worry about the funding sources and losing funding because of low performance in our schools just adds to the stress

Many teachers are getting out of teaching because teachers and schools are expected to perform miracles. Teachers aren't doing their jobs if they have a fourth-grade student who is scoring low and trying hard but still cannot gain 1-3 grade level in one year to reach the same level as their peers. It isn't because the school or teachers or students haven't tried hard enough but it's the straight fact that every kid is not the same and doesn't learn at the same rate of their peers. It's called diversity. The last time I checked all students are not the same so why do we keep going around like a dog chasing its tail? If there's a miracle formula or something we can take and use to pull all of our students up to grade level that would be GREAT, in the land of perfect. We don't live in the land of perfect, we live in the land of diversity. So with diversity, we can have one

classroom with 15-20 different levels of learning and we, as teachers, are expected to do miracles so that all of the students finish off the school year at their respected grade level. That hasn't happened in the past and I'm certain that it won't be something that will be happening in the near or far future. So because we are not miracle workers, we stand to lose funding to private schools. Again I must re-iterate...We are not miracle workers but we are dedicated to do our best each school day to teach our students from where they are, up to the next level of learning, no matter how long that takes and still treat each student with respect and dignity.

Until we have exhausted all of the avenues, taking public school money and shifting it to private schools it is not the answer. The only ones that this bill is going to effect is our students and our future. Join our teachers and schools in making a difference instead of disciplining schools and taking their funding and passing it on to and rewarding private schools, who get to pick and choose their students. Let's not forget all of the students that are not able to get into private schools because they are passed over because they have disabilities. Are we just going to kick them to the side, pass them over and take their public funds and give it to private schools who won't even consider enrolling these, who hold no accountability for making decisions like this. The nonpublic schools that will benefit from HB 1532 are not required to follow many federal and state requirements and the bill specifically prohibits requiring nonpublic schools to alter their admissions policy. They are free to deny admission to any student for any reason, including cognitive ability, physical disability, as well as behavioral and social limitations. Public schools, on the other hand, proudly educate all comers, regardless of their limitations and abilities. It is not unreasonable to believe that if private, nonpublic schools receive state funding, then they should have to follow the same state and federal requirements as North Dakota's public schools.

Finally, teacher shortage is one of our major problems in ND and in our country. Passing this bill would discourage teachers in the field even more to go into new fields or take jobs in other fields because the lack of support for hardworking schools, teachers, and students. If you think teacher shortage is an issue now, pass this bill and you will see the decline of education and the lack of teachers we have now will not compare to the teacher shortage that we will be facing in the future due to the lack of support for our public schools. As you vote, consider all the detrimental effects this will have now and, in the future, and do the right thing and vote No on HB 1532.
Thank you,

Sincerely,
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