

Dear Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Tara Koster, and I am writing to express my opposition to HB1172. My daughter, who graduated from Bismarck High School in 2024, has always been a motivated and high-achieving student. From a young age, she thrived in a fast-paced learning environment and was eager to complete her K12 education, attend college, and get to her chosen career.

The passing of the bill during the 68th Legislative Session, which provided greater flexibility in her education, was transformative for her. It allowed her to take control of her learning pace, and the positive impact on her mental health and overall well-being was significant. She became more focused, happier, and increasingly ambitious. For example, during her senior year, she chose to attend her first period in person at BHS and then spent her afternoons either working at her job, studying at the library, or working on school at a local coffee shop. During this time, she still maintained her 3.9 GPA.

Another benefit of her being in control of her schedule was able to accept a position as a shift manager—an accomplishment that would have been difficult without the flexibility to balance her schoolwork and career. She finally felt in control of her life, and on track to achieve her goals.

During In-person schooling, she often felt like her time could have been spent better. She was done earlier than others with her assignments. Once she had the option to take virtual classes, she gained back valuable time every day, which she could dedicate to her mental health and other personal goals. Contrary to the misconception that students may choose virtual learning out of dislike for teachers or to take the easy way out, my daughter's

experience was quite the opposite. She has always respected her teachers, but the flexibility provided by online learning was the key factor in helping her succeed and stay mentally healthy.

My daughter graduated a semester early and has continued to thrive in the college online format. She is highly motivated, self-directed, and goal-oriented.

I believe the decision on how and where a child learns should remain in the hands of the family, in collaboration with the school. Funding should follow the student and be flexible enough to support those who excel in virtual learning environments. I strongly believe it is unfair to ask parents to bear the financial burden of paying for virtual courses, especially when the current system worked well for students like my daughter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tara Koster