

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1540, which is currently under consideration by the committee. As a concerned life-long North Dakota resident, the current Board President of District 1 (Grand Forks Public Schools), and a firm believer in the strength of our public education system, I urge you to recommend a DO NOT PASS on this legislation. The legislation in question seeks to divert crucial funds from public schools by implementing a voucher system.

Key Concerns Regarding the Voucher System:

1. Limited Access to Private Schools. Only 32% of North Dakotan families have access to private schools, meaning that the majority of our residents would not benefit from the proposed voucher system. By diverting public funds to private institutions, we would be disproportionately benefiting a small segment of the population while leaving the vast majority of North Dakota families without equal opportunities.

2. Inequities in Homeschooling vs. Public Schooling. Homeschooling doesn't have the same standards public schooling currently institutes, and even with the proposed changes, massive inequities will still exist. By diverting funds to homeschooling, we are financially hindering our public dollars to support students who aren't involved in the public process.

3. Draining Resources from Public Schools. Our public schools are already facing significant challenges, including underfunding, overcrowding, and insufficient resources. Taking money away from these institutions would only expound the issues we face, further draining the resources from where they are most needed. Instead of improving educational opportunities, a voucher system would only exacerbate the crisis in our public schools.

4. Worsening the Educational Crisis. North Dakota's public schools are integral to ensuring that EVERY child receives a quality education. Diverting public funding to private schools that do not serve all students will only deepen the inequities in our education system. Private institutions are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools, which risks further undermining educational outcomes for all students, particularly those from underserved communities.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to reject the proposal of school vouchers in North Dakota in ALL of its iterations. Public dollars must be protected and stay in the public sector.

Best regards,

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