

To members of the House Education committee:

I am a public school teacher in Minot, North Dakota. I have been in education for over 15 years, having taught in North Dakota for 12 years. I have taught in class B schools in western North Dakota and currently in Minot for several years. I have taught both special education and in general education.

I share this information because this particular bill, if passed, would have a devastating impact on schools, both urban and rural. It would take public money and divert it to families for various educational needs or wants, including private tuition. A large majority of families who attend private schools already have money to attend that school. Those schools are not subject to the same criteria and accountability that public schools are. If they were and they had to accept any and all students who applied, it would be a different conversation. However, this bill does not address that fact.

Typically, any change in funding public education hits rural schools harder than urban schools. Taking money out of the general fund would create a scenario in which the Legislature would have to use even more money in order to cover those costs and the local and county municipalities would have to raise property taxes in order to simply provide that essential service of education.

So, I strongly oppose this bill and ANY bill which attempts to use public funds for private schools. Private schools have their own accountability systems, to their credit, but do not have to educate all children. They are not held to the same standard of education or the same standards of transparency that a public school is and thus should not get public dollars.