

House Bill 1540
House Education Committee -- Representative Pat D. Heinert, Chair
February 5, 2025
Testimony in Opposition to HB 1540

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee, I am Vicki Voldal Rosenau, a parent and resident of Valley City, ND. Thank you for this opportunity to offer my testimony in opposition to House Bill 1540.

I would like to focus my testimony on the principle that undergirds why HB 1540 not only is unconstitutional, but also is opposed by at least 68 percent of North Dakota voters.

The North Dakota public as a whole has covenanted to provide public schools as a public service for everyone, by collectively paying taxes for that express purpose. Obviously, we have covenanted to provide various other important public services, as well. Public roads, public libraries, public parks and public water systems come to mind. In each case, no person or family has the right to demand that we all help to pay for some private “alternative facility,” just because they prefer it. Tax dollars for our public roads system do not “follow the taxpayer” who wants to spend “his share” on a separate private road. Allowing that to happen would shatter the public covenant, and it even sounds absurd.

The same holds true for schools. If a person dislikes the public schools that are available to him, he does not have to use them, but he has absolutely no right to demand that everyone else contribute to his purchasing the privilege of using a private school that he has identified—and may even be the owner of.

Furthermore, if an individual deems a public school (or any other public service) to be of inferior quality, it is his civic duty to roll-up-his-sleeves and help the community as a whole to upgrade that service in accordance with the will of the majority. That’s local democracy in action, and that’s what our wonderful nation was founded upon.

Finally, by destabilizing our excellent public-schools system, HB 1540 would substantively undermine the solid foundation that this legislative body has already established for meeting the specific challenges outlined on Monday by State Supt. Kirsten Baesler when she discussed the Presidential Executive Order. Thanks to the forward-looking legislation enacted by the past two Legislatures, the State of North Dakota has already made great strides (and investments) to provide an array of innovational, even cutting-edge, educational opportunities—**all within our dynamic network of public schools.**

These exciting initiatives are already in place, are producing great results, and must be fully funded and supported in order to provide all the required educational-choice options within the proven “schools within the public schools” model.

Given the urgency of Supt. Baesler’s call to action, now is definitely NOT the time to toss out the publicly-funded educational innovations that have just been established in precisely the areas that she targeted. I urge you to recommend “Do Not Pass” on HB 1540.

Thank you for your consideration,
Vicki Voldal Rosenau, Valley City