

February 5, 2025  
House Education Committee  
HB 1540 - In Favor

Chairman Heinert, members of the education committee, my name is Emily Heydt. I am a senior from Berthold. I am here to offer testimony that is in favor of house bill 1540. By sharing the following testimony, I hope to provide further helpful insight to guide your decision of whether or not to recommend the passing of this bill and similar legislation. I'd first like to preface by giving you an overview of my academic background. I was homeschooled from preschool to 4th grade, attended public school from 5th grade to 8th grade, and will graduate in May from Our Redeemer's Christian School. I am incredibly grateful for each type of education I have received, and I firmly believe that my experience within these schools can attribute a valuable perspective for each of you to consider.

I would challenge each of you here not to see this as a public versus private school matter. I believe the goal of private and public schools is not as different as debates about the political aspects of education may persuade us to believe. This is a matter of student and parent choice and opportunity, not a battle between private and public. North Dakota Department of Public Instruction's mission statement says that they will "...partner with schools and communities to provide a statewide system of excellent service and support to ensure a healthy school environment that fosters student success."

This idea of providing a healthy environment that fosters student success is what private and public schools have in common, and is exactly why our legislators should consider providing more opportunity for parents and students to decide for themselves the type of education that will best foster their success.

At the conclusion of my 8th grade year, I began to realize that the public school I was attending was no longer the healthiest fit for me, with various factors leading to this realization. I knew I needed to make a change in order to further my growth as a student. I brought these thoughts to my parents, and I was fortunate enough that they recognized my concerns and were able to send me to the school I currently attend. Choosing to go to a private school has resulted in many personal sacrifices. I commute half an hour to and from school each day, and I participate in activities that often keep me in town after school. This results in me spending more hours in a week away from home than I do at home. Most people willing to switch schools understand that there are sacrifices that will be made, and no matter the reason behind this change, we should be supporting their decision to choose what education is best for them.

No type of education is perfect, whether homeschool, public, or private. I can attest to the fact that each has their own set of pros and cons. I was given excellent education in all three types of schools, yet I don't believe I would be the same student standing before you today had I not switched schools my freshman year. Homeschool was the healthiest fit for me as an elementary student. Public school was the healthiest fit for me as a junior high student. And private school has been the healthiest fit for me as a high school student. It doesn't matter which type of education you choose, what matters is that you are able to make that choice. When I think about the possibility that there are students in my state who may be in the same shoes I was as an 8th grader, considering a different education experience, but then them not being able to make that change because of financial restraint, I am incredibly saddened to think that they may be missing out on the opportunity for personal growth and the positives that I have seen can come from a private education.

By passing this bill or bills similar to this, our legislators will be providing students and parents the opportunity to choose the healthiest, best fitting education that will foster their success by removing some of the financial obstacle that comes with pursuing a private education.

Similar to the way I was not forced to switch schools, I was not asked by anyone to come speak today. I heard conversations about these bills and felt it was necessary to come and share my experience with you. Let my choice to come speak today out of the overflow of the compassion I have for students and parents like me be the greatest testimony to the impacts these bills could potentially have.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am willing to stand for questions.