

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1540 – Education Savings Accounts (ESA)

Committee Chair and Members of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly,

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1540, which would establish an Education Savings Account (ESA) program in our state. This bill represents a crucial step toward expanding educational opportunities and addressing the financial barriers that prevent many families from accessing private education.

Expanding Access to Private Education

House Bill 1540 would directly benefit families who seek a private education but currently lack the financial means to afford it. At Riverside Christian School, we are dedicated to providing a rigorous, faith-based education. By offering state-funded ESAs, this bill would ensure that more families have access to an education that aligns with their values, without being limited by their financial circumstances.

Leveraging Private Support for Greater Access

Private schools, including Riverside Christian, already provide substantial tuition assistance to families in need. The ESA program would complement these efforts by matching public funds with private resources, significantly expanding our capacity to assist families. This public-private partnership would enhance access to a quality, faith-centered education, ensuring that more students benefit from the unique learning environment we offer.

Commitment to Inclusivity and Student Success

Opponents of this bill often express concerns about excluding students with special needs. However, Riverside Christian School is committed to meeting the needs of all learners, including those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). We have a long track record of inclusivity and support for students with diverse needs, and the ESA program would allow us to strengthen that commitment, ensuring that every child receives the care and education they deserve.

Conclusion

In conclusion, House Bill 1540 provides a transformative opportunity to expand educational choice for North Dakota families, particularly those who are financially constrained. By supporting this bill, the state will help schools like Riverside Christian continue to provide a high-quality, affordable, faith-based education to more families. I urge you to pass this important legislation, which will foster greater access to educational opportunities and strengthen the long-term future of North Dakota's children. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martens
President, Riverside Christian School