

Chair Owens and the members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Melissa Buchhop and I am a 4th grade teacher in the Grand Forks Public Schools. I urge a DO NOT PASS on HB 1607. No matter what these bills are called—education savings accounts, scholarship programs, or otherwise—if they divert public dollars to private schools, they are vouchers. Public funds should NOT be going to private schools. Taxpayer money is for public entities.

As a taxpayer, I pay for public parks and our local park district in Grand Forks. As a parent I can decide that I don't want to take my child(ren) to the public park and instead put up a playset in my yard. This does not mean that I now get to ask for public funds to fund my playset because I am not using the public parks. The same goes for schools. I can choose to send my child to private school or homeschool, but I do not and should not get tax money to pay for that private school or to homeschool.

Private schools don't have to follow the same rules as public schools, they can choose to reject students based on disability or socioeconomic status. Public dollars should be used to strengthen our public schools (our teachers, support staff, mental health resources, and students), which are for everybody, not to subsidize private institutions that serve only a few. We need the legislature to invest in public education, not dismantle it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Melissa Buchhop