



To Whom it may concern;

My name is Joe Drumm. I'm reaching out in opposition to HB 1607, a bill which takes public dollars and moves those funds to support private schools (otherwise commonly known as vouchers).

Most conversations involving education from my perspective revolve around state funding and the need for increases. Most observing the state and national educational scene agree that we are in the midst of a recruitment and retainment crisis in public education. Many colleges and institutions that traditionally produce teachers are reporting a lack of candidates interested in or graduating from their programs.

Locally to my district, UND acts as a litmus in the state of education in North Dakota. In the 2011-12 school year, UND reported 823 enrollees in their school of Education and Human development, 5.6% of their total enrollment. This last academic year, UND reported 607 enrollees in the same school, 4.28% of total enrollment**. This drop isn't atypical, and has drawn national attention as schools and districts scramble to deal with the fallout of these decreases in enrollment.

Positions are left vacant for months at a time with few to any qualified candidates applying for the position. At a local and national level, it's becoming harder and harder to find people who are willing to do the work and commit the time required to work in this profession.*** As of 2024, at least 27 governors have called for legislative action to address the sinking number of teachers seeking to enter the field*. These shortages aren't specific to Red or Blue states, and are impacting the country on a fairly consistent trend.

And yet, here we are, arguing if moving money out of public education is the correct way to address this issue. When viewed from this perspective, the entire conversation becomes almost comically nonsensical. In the midst of a crisis, it makes little sense to further expound the problems that add to the severity of the crisis. In other words, it's equivalent to pouring water into a sinking boat. Working to draw funding down from an already struggling and critically important sector solves nothing and draws the problem out, forcing further emergency measures that hurt schools and hurt the public good. Only 32% of North Dakota counties have access to a private school. 2 out of 3 North Dakotan families wouldn't benefit from this sort of legislation in any meaningful way.

I strongly urge a Do Not Pass recommendation on these bills in committee. Pulling public funding to private entities solves nothing and directly hurts North Dakotans.

Thank you for your time,
Joe Drumm



Sources:

*<https://www.nga.org/news/commentary/state-education-trends-for-2024/>

**<https://und.edu/analytics-and-planning/data-and-reports/2024.html>

***<https://www.inforum.com/news/north-dakota/north-dakotas-teacher-shortage-creating-imminent-peril-as-board-seeks-emergency-rule>