

1 HB 1607– EEA Bill

2 Mandan Public Schools – Mike Bitz, Superintendent

3 Good morning, Chairman Heinert and members of the Senate
4 Education Committee. For the record, my name is Mike Bitz. I
5 am fortunate to serve as the superintendent for Mandan Public
6 Schools. Thank you for all you do to support education in ND. I
7 am here today to oppose HB1607. I will be brief.

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9 This bill appropriates \$179,000,000 to private schools without
10 private schools having to account for a nickel of how the
11 appropriation is spent. The only fiscal accountability is the ability
12 for DPI to audit the EEA of the parent. – As a Conservative and a
13 ND taxpayer, I will tell you that this is not only bad government,
14 it is wrong. ND has great private schools, with good people
15 working in them, but giving anyone \$179,000,000 without any
16 fiscal accountability is a bad idea. If you approve this bill, please
17 put guardrails in place to ensure full accountability for these
18 dollars. The taxpayers of ND deserve this.

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20 ND has great private schools, and no one is arguing that parents
21 should not be able to send their children to these great schools.
22 However I find it confusing that the legislature is also
23 considering a parents right bill that in its current form will not

1 apply to private schools even if they accept public dollars. If
2 private schools accept public dollars (and these are public dollars
3 as evidenced by the fiscal note attached to this bill), shouldn't we
4 expect them to open their board meetings and welcome parents to
5 attend, and have the ability to address the board? Should parents
6 really need to forfeit their rights as parents if the private school
7 chooses to admit their child? I think the overwhelming majority
8 of ND residents can agree that **Accepting public dollars means**
9 **accepting public accountability!**

10 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I urge you
11 to vote NO on HB1607. At a minimum if you are going to
12 approve this bill, amend it and give taxpayers the fiscal
13 accountability they deserve. I would be happy to stand for any
14 questions.

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