

I am writing this in opposition to HB 1607. I have been an educator for 32 years and I spent 9 years of that teaching in private schools. I personally know that private schools don't provide services for a whole sub-section of students, mainly students with disabilities. Public schools are held to a higher standard since they are required to accept ALL students. This is a time when we need all our resources in the public schools.

HB 1607 aims to divert taxpayer dollars to private and religious schools, which are not held to the same transparency, accountability, or accessibility standards as our public schools.

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 remain in public schools, where they serve all students, regardless of ability, background, or financial status. Our public schools are the foundation of our communities, and instead of diverting resources away from them, we should be investing in smaller class sizes, support staff, mental health resources, and competitive wages for educators.

North Dakota students, families, and educators are counting on us to stand up for **fully funded, equitable public education**. Let's make sure every public dollar stays where it belongs—in public schools.

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