

February 4, 2025

Dear members of the North Dakota House of Representatives Education committee, my name is Darrel Lund and I am a retired teacher of 42 years in the West Fargo Public School system. As I wrote about SB 2295 to your committee yesterday, I am opposed to HB 1607 which authorizes a transfer of the per pupil payment into a student's educational empowerment account for students eligible to enroll in a North Dakota public school but have not enrolled into a ND public school or filed intent to home school paperwork. The fiscal note estimates the cost to fund these students is **\$175,480,128!** Per pupil payment is currently set at \$11,072 per student. HB 1369 may increase the per pupil payment for the 2025-2027 biennium which would **increase the cost** of HB 1607.. The fiscal note also assumes just over **\$3.5 million for the first biennium** to contract with a vendor to set up the educational empowerment accounts and debit cards authorized in this bill. This shift of public dollars to private schools is preposterous and unacceptable.

I am a member of Holy Cross Catholic Church in West Fargo and support the church and school financially. That is my choice. As we were reminded by Bishop Folda during the past week celebrating Catholic Schools Week, there are options for families that cannot afford the cost of tuition to attend Catholic Schools.

One of the ways the state already provides support for parents of private school children is the deduction of tuition on North Dakota income tax. If the state insists on following through with these assaults on public school funding, I will be less inclined to support the schools of the JP II Catholic School system.

Again, when considering bills that use public dollars to support nonpublic schools, answer this question; **How does this bill strengthen our public schools?**

I urge you to recommend **Do Not Pass** and continue to strengthen public-schools by covering 100% of the cost to educate every North Dakota student in K-12 public schools and offering relief for overburdened property owners.

Thank you,

Darrel Lund