

House Bill 1607  
House Education Committee -- Representative Pat D. Heinert, Chair  
February 5, 2025  
Testimony in Opposition to HB 1607

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee, I am Vicki Voldal Rosenau, a parent and resident of Valley City, ND. Thank you for this opportunity to offer my testimony in opposition to House Bill 1607.

On Monday, Supt. Kirsten Baesler addressed this committee regarding a recent Presidential Executive Order on enhancing educational freedom and opportunities. In North Dakota, the only logical and responsible way for education planners to expand such opportunities is to build on the considerable (and commendable) targeted investments that the State has very recently made in educational innovations WITHIN THE PUBLIC-SCHOOLS SYSTEM.

Because HB 1607 would actually undermine that existing system, it should be rejected. In support of this position, I would like to offer three points:

- 1) A strong majority (68%) of the ND voters whom you represent do NOT want any diversion of public money to pay for private school tuition. Yet, 65% of voters do support increased spending for public schools.  
<https://www.kvrr.com/2025/01/06/north-dakota-united-survey-show-residents-oppose-private-tuition-vouchers/>  
<https://northdakotamonitor.com/2025/01/06/poll-north-dakotans-support-free-school-lunches-sour-on-public-dollars-for-private-tuition/>  
<https://ndunited.org/news-media-center/press-releases/new-polling-highlights-north-dakotans-priorities-expectations>
- 2) There is strong evidence that academic achievement is actually LOWERED for students who are removed from public schools and instead placed in private facilities. At best, research is inadequate and conflicted. As James Vukelic of Bismarck has publicly stated, “Apparently, when it comes to homeschooled students we really don’t know, to quote former President George W. Bush, ‘Is our children learning?’”  
[https://bismarcktribune.com/opinion/letters/letter-serious-research-needed-before-spending-public-money-on-school-vouchers/article\\_4d1376c8-da71-11ef-9b48-b399fe74e40a.html](https://bismarcktribune.com/opinion/letters/letter-serious-research-needed-before-spending-public-money-on-school-vouchers/article_4d1376c8-da71-11ef-9b48-b399fe74e40a.html)
- 3) The claim that ND can appropriate TAX dollars for private schooling without defunding cash-strapped public schools is flatly dishonest. Allocating our finite tax dollars IS a “zero-sum game,” because taxpayers cannot and will not go along with paying ever-increasing taxes. Future allocations for public schools will inevitably be lessened if ANY tax dollars are diverted to private facilities.

Particularly in light of the challenges described by Supt. Baesler, we need to work together to strengthen our currently-underfunded public schools, instead of siphoning off public money for non-public entities. As you heard in compelling testimony yesterday morning, public schools across the state are already creating wonderfully-innovative educational opportunities for all our students.

Let’s redouble those already-launched, innovative initiatives in order to fully meet the new demand for increased educational opportunities – **all within our traditional public-schools network**. In order to accomplish that, I urge you to recommend “Do Not Pass” on HB 1607.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Vicki Voldal Rosenau, Valley City