



NDSBA
**NORTH DAKOTA SCHOOL
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SB 2241

**Testimony of Amy De Kok
House Education Committee
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Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Amy De Kok. I am the executive director of the North Dakota School Boards Association. NDSBA represents all 168 North Dakota public school districts and their governing boards. I am writing to express our opposition to SB 2241, which seeks to authorize public charter schools in North Dakota. While the intent of the bill may be to expand educational options, it is both unnecessary and potentially harmful to our existing public school system.

Public Charter Schools Are Unnecessary in North Dakota

North Dakota's public schools already have the flexibility and capacity to implement many of the initiatives that charter schools propose. Due to measures enacted by the North Dakota Legislature over the past several sessions, public school districts have been granted broad latitude in innovating their educational approaches, including curriculum design, specialized academic programs, and operational autonomy. Traditional public schools in North Dakota can and do implement programs that cater to at-risk students, provide alternative educational models, and adapt to community-specific needs. There is no demonstrable need for an additional layer of public charter schools when our existing schools already have the tools necessary to provide quality, diverse educational opportunities.

Lack of Accountability and Oversight When Charter Schools Fail

One of the most glaring omissions in SB 2241 is the lack of a robust and clear plan for what happens when a charter school fails. Across the country, we have seen numerous examples of charter schools closing abruptly due to financial mismanagement, academic underperformance, or governance failures, leaving students and families in chaos. The bill does not sufficiently address how the state will ensure charter schools remain accountable or how students will be supported if a charter school ceases operations. Unlike traditional public schools, which are required to operate under public accountability standards and remain stable institutions within communities, charter schools can open and close with little consequence—disrupting students' education and wasting taxpayer funds.

Negative Impact on Teacher and Staff Availability

Another concern with SB 2241 is its potential to create a staffing crisis in North Dakota's public schools. Charter schools would draw from the same limited pool of qualified educators and staff, exacerbating existing teacher shortages in rural and urban districts alike. This would ultimately weaken our public schools, as they struggle to retain experienced educators who may be lured by charter school opportunities—often without the same stability or long-term benefits as traditional public school employment.

No Clear Evidence That Public Charter Schools Improve Student Outcomes

Proponents of charter schools often claim that they improve student outcomes, but research does not universally support this assertion. Numerous studies have shown that charter schools do not consistently outperform traditional public schools, particularly when demographic factors are accounted for. Instead, outcomes vary widely, with many charter schools performing at or below the level of their traditional public school counterparts. North Dakota's public schools already perform well by national standards, and there is no compelling evidence that charter schools would lead to better educational outcomes for our students.

SB 2241 is a solution in search of a problem. North Dakota has invested heavily in ensuring that public schools can meet the needs of all students, and this bill introduces unnecessary risks without providing clear benefits. It creates potential instability in our education system, threatens to siphon away qualified teachers and staff, and does not adequately ensure accountability if charter schools fail. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to issue a DO NOT PASS recommendation on SB 2241 and instead continue to support the strength and success of our existing public schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.