

Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Melissa Buchhop and I am a 4th grade teacher in the Grand Forks Public Schools. I also have 2 children attending the Grand Forks Public Schools. I urge a DO NOT PASS on SB 2400. 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 NOT be going to private schools or homeschoolers. Taxpayer money is for public entities.

In the state of North Dakota, all parents have the right to choose where to send their children; either to homeschool them, send them to a private school, or to a public school. Public schools are responsible and obligated to the state for standards, practices and overall accountability. Private schools don't have to follow the same rules as public schools, they can choose to reject students based on disability or socioeconomic status.

ESA's have a habit of costing states more than anticipated as well. Iowa enacted ESA's last year, and saw a bill of 218 million dollars on the state government, over double what was originally voted on and agreed to. Arizona overspent on their version of ESA's this last year, causing a budget shortfall, requiring the state to slash funding to other public programs to keep the budget afloat. The state of our schools in North Dakota cannot handle this drop in funding.

We should be investing any additional available money into strengthening our public schools (our teachers, support staff, mental health resources, and students), which are for everybody. We need the legislature to invest in public education, not dismantle it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Melissa Buchhop