



North Dakota Home School Association

Serving Home Educators since 1985

SB 2400

NO

Chair Heinert and Committee Members,

I write on behalf of the North Dakota Home School Association (NDHSA) to offer our opposition to SB 2400. Our association is **fundamentally opposed to public dollars funding home education.**

Our association is the only statewide homeschool association and we have worked tirelessly since 1985 to gain homeschool freedom in our great state. I have personally been involved in that fight since the inception of the organization.

Our organization has a mailing list of **over 1200 families**. Last year's DPI numbers for homeschoolers in the state was **5602 students**. Statistically homeschool families are a little larger than average with about 50% having 3 or more children. So doing the math, you can see our organization represents the largest population of homeschooling families in the state.

Our mission states: To provide a comprehensive home education information system to support, train and protect every willing North Dakota individual, family and church in the methods of privately-funded, parent-directed home education. Because of that mission, we have issued an official position on ESA's.

We Believe:

- *Parents are responsible for the education of their children.*
- *Those who receive funding should be accountable to the source of those funds.*
- *The freedom to educate according to one's conscience is more important than financial support.*
- *"School Choice" is best achieved through deregulation and lower taxes. This empowers parents and communities to determine what works best for the children entrusted to them. With fewer financial constraints, families will have more resources to allocate as they see fit.*
- *Funding homeschools will ultimately **reduce** "School Choice" because government-funded schools are no longer truly independent. A major limitation of public schools is their obligation to be accountable to the public rather than to parents. While this is appropriate since the public funds them, it also restricts parental authority.*
- *When tax dollars are used for education, some taxpayers inevitably fund belief systems that they do not support.*
- *A public school option already exists. Funding home educators will erode their independence. Instead, efforts should focus on improving public schools while allowing and trusting parents to educate their children as they see fit.*

Therefore be it resolved that the NDHSA is opposed to any public funding of home education.

Questions:

- Do we have an undefined term here? P. 3, line 24 – (educational services)
- Not even considering the Blaine Amendment is this Constitutional? (Authority vested)
- Will bills like this provide the ability for more families to homeschool? (Homeschooling is not expensive + historical implications)
- What is the premise of funding students rather than systems? (Using a collectivist funding method – just a repeat of what we already have)

Other Considerations:

- ESA's until 2022 were limited in scope – special needs, low income
- Universal ESA's are very new some states just implementing in January of this year.

On a Personal Note:

Qualified educational expenses

- j. Mental health assistance – money is not the issue, but lack of providers
- l. Educational camps – music camps, will this be a disservice to the student if the state provides \$.

Because of our concern about potential unintended consequences of this bill, I have worked with Representative Morton over the weekend to create an amendment that would make a distinction between students educated at home using ESA dollars and traditional homeschoolers as per current Century Code. This is often termed a “firewall of protection”. Many states either do not include home educators in ESA's or have created a firewall such as this. Kristy Rose will be following me to walk you through what a firewall does and data related to home education and ESA participation.

Sincerely,

Theresa Deckert

North Dakota Home School Association

Volunteer Lobbyist and Legislative Liaison

701-230-8166