

TO: ND Senate Education Committee

FROM: Kathy Marquette

DATE: March 16, 2025

SUBJECT: SB 2400

Members of the North Dakota Senate Education Committee, the purpose of this memorandum is to provide written testimony *in opposition to SB 2400* relating to educational savings accounts.

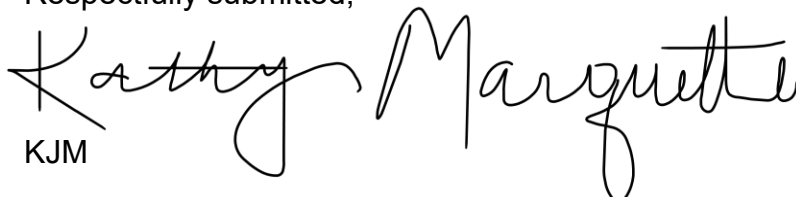
Having been in education for 31 years in the state of North Dakota—2 years at the secondary level and 29 at the post-secondary level, I have had the opportunity to work with a diverse cross-section of students, many of them coming from North Dakota high schools. Only 17 of 53 North Dakota counties--approximately 32%--have access to private schools. What does this say for the opportunities for many rural North Dakota students? Private schools are not located in rural areas, but rather in heavily populated cities such as Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot, and Bismarck. The North Dakota Constitution requires funding a uniform system of public education. By directing dollars to private schools, you are creating a great disparity between children in the state. Educational savings accounts should benefit ALL students. If parents want private education for their children, then they should pay for it.

Furthermore, where is the accountability and responsibility of using educational savings accounts at private schools versus public schools? Public money requires public accountability; public schools required audits; public schools require school board meetings; public schools require transparency, and public schools are open to all students regardless of background, sex, ability, and socioeconomic status. Private schools select their student bodies.

People must realize that rural schools are the “hub” of a community. Rural schools serve as centers for community activities, community spirit, community engagement, etc. Rural schools are already financially stressed, why add more strain by directing monies to private schools?

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony *in opposition to SB 2400*. I genuinely hope you take it into consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

  
KJM