

1 North Dakota School Study Council Testimony in Opposition to SB 2400 –
2 Education Saving Accounts

3 Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

4 Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2400. My name
5 is Paul Stremick and I represent the North Dakota School Study Council. I
6 am here today to express my strong opposition to HB 2400, which
7 proposes the establishment of Education Savings Accounts (ESA). While
8 the concept of school choice may appear beneficial on the surface, this bill
9 presents significant concerns regarding financial accountability, fairness,
10 and the fundamental principles of North Dakota's education system.

11 First and foremost, HB 2400 lacks any substantial accountability measures
12 for the \$61 million (which seems low according to my calculations) in public
13 funds that would be diverted to private education. As responsible stewards
14 of taxpayer dollars, we must ensure that public funds are used effectively,
15 transparently, and with rigorous oversight. This proposal does not align with
16 North Dakota's conservative values of fiscal responsibility and
17 accountability. Public schools operate under strict regulations to ensure that
18 funds are spent wisely and in the best interest of students. ESA funds,
19 however, would be distributed without the same level of scrutiny, leading to
20 potential misuse and inefficiencies.

21 Another significant issue is that several school districts in North Dakota
22 already receive no state funding through the current funding formula, yet
23 they must still adhere to all state education laws and mandates. SB 2400
24 exacerbates this inequity by redirecting additional state resources to private
25 education while failing to address the disparities in funding for public
26 schools. If the state mandates compliance with educational regulations, it
27 must also ensure that adequate funding is provided to all public districts,
28 rather than diverting essential resources to unregulated private entities.

29 Public schools are the foundation of our communities, serving all children
30 regardless of background, ability, or socioeconomic status. HB 1540 risks
31 undermining this critical institution by prioritizing unaccountable private
32 education funding over the needs of our public school system. North
33 Dakota students deserve a well-funded, transparent, and equitable

34 education system that supports all learners, not just those who can access
35 alternative schooling options.

36 I urge you to reject SB 2400 and instead focus on strengthening our public
37 education system to ensure accountability, fairness, and responsible
38 stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Thank you for your time and consideration.
39 I am happy to answer any questions or provide further information as
40 needed.

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42 Dr. Paul Stremick