

Dear Chairman and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 2400. While this bill includes a small allocation for public school students, the reality is that the vast majority of the \$60,000,000 will go to private schools in large North Dakota cities like Fargo, Bismarck, and Grand Forks, leaving rural communities to foot the bill.

North Dakota's public schools are constitutionally mandated to serve all children. Unlike private schools, they:

- Accept every student, regardless of ability, background, or financial situation
- Operate under public oversight and accountability standards
- Provide essential services such as special education, transportation, and extracurricular activities

However, with SB 2400 the only thing a participating school must NOT discriminate against is race. This bill would give private schools the freedom to cherry-pick students while leaving the public school system to educate everyone else, including those with special needs, those facing poverty, and those struggling academically. This is not real school choice. It's private school choice.

Furthermore, the majority of private schools in our state are Christian faith-based, which would make it unconstitutional to allocate public funds towards religious instruction and indoctrination.

Supporters of this bill like to argue that the parents of private school students are paying for education twice: through private school tuition and through taxes that fund public schools. This, of course, is their **choice**. North Dakota law guarantees free public education, not free or even subsidized private education. Many tax-payers do not have children enrolled at a public school, including those with children too young to attend school, those with grown children, and those who do not have children at all. Should they also have a portion of their taxes returned to them? Of course not. We all know that's not how taxes and public funding works. It's not for our personal benefit – it's for the benefit of our society as a whole. **Private school families are no more entitled to public education funds than any other person without kids in public school.**

Even with help, most North Dakota families still cannot afford the full cost of private school tuition. Between tuition, books, uniforms, transportation, and fees, private schooling is simply out of reach for most working families. The majority of these funds will go to families with students currently enrolled in private schools and already able to pay the tuition in full.

Public education serves every child, no matter their background, ability level, or family income. If North Dakota has extra funds to invest in education, those dollars should go toward strengthening public school by improving teacher pay, updating classrooms, and expanding student support services. **I urge you to reject SB 2400 and instead focus on policies that strengthen North Dakota's public schools for all students, not just a select few.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kara Geiger
Mandan