

1 SB2400– ESA Bill

2 Mandan Public Schools – Mike Bitz, Superintendent

3 Good morning, Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee. For the  
4 record, my name is Mike Bitz. I am fortunate to serve as the superintendent for Mandan Public  
5 Schools. Thank you for all you do to support education in ND. I am here today to ask you to  
6 oppose SB2400. I will be brief.

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8 **Private schools getting public dollars is not new.** I have been a school administrator since 1991,  
9 and private schools have been receiving federal dollars for their school lunch program and they  
10 also receive federal title dollars. **No one has an issue with this because private schools abide**  
11 **by the same rules as public schools.** The federal government is often accused of being wasteful,  
12 but they do require accountability for public dollars. ND should so the same.

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14 SB2400 appropriates millions of dollars to private schools without private schools having to  
15 account for a nickel of how the appropriation is spent. As a Conservative and a ND taxpayer, I  
16 will tell you that this is not only bad government, it is wrong. ND has great private schools, with  
17 good people working in them, but giving anyone millions of dollars without any accountability is  
18 a bad idea. If you approve this bill, please put guardrails in place to ensure full accountability for  
19 these dollars. The taxpayers of ND deserve this.

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21 Finally, I find it confusing that the legislature is also considering a parent’s rights bill, that in its  
22 current form will not apply to private schools, even if they take public dollars. If a private school  
23 accepts public dollars, shouldn’t we expect them to open their board meetings and welcome parents  
24 to attend, and have the ability to address the school board? Should parents really need to forfeit  
25 their rights as parents if the private school chooses to admit their child? Accepting public dollars  
26 means accepting public accountability! The fiscal note on this bill means these are public dollars

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28 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I urge you to vote NO on SB2400. At a  
29 minimum if you are going to approve this bill, amend it and give taxpayers the fiscal accountability  
30 they deserve. I would be happy to stand for any questions.

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