

Trista Ziegelmann

SB 2400

Opposed

As the mother of two, soon to be three, school-age children, living in a rural North Dakota community whose family does not have access to the luxury of school choice, I stand firmly opposed to the proposed Senate Bill 2400 on school vouchers and implore you to vote “No”. While the bill may be presented as a solution to provide more educational opportunities, it fails to consider the realities faced by many parents like me in rural North Dakota, who do not have the financial flexibility or resources to fully take advantage of these vouchers due to lack of proximity to school choice. The bill also fails to consider access to education for all students, PK-12, furthering the education divides, inequities, and gaps, causing harm to our children and rural communities.

First and foremost, the voucher system primarily benefits families who are already able to make the most of it—those who can afford to pay the difference in tuition if the voucher does not cover the full cost of private school education. For working-class families like mine, this creates a fundamental inequality. If the voucher doesn’t cover the entirety of private school tuition, it only adds to the financial burden we already carry, making it impossible for us to access these “choices.”

Moreover, while private schools may appear to offer a better education, this bill overlooks the very real fact that not all private institutions are equipped to meet the diverse needs of students, nor are private schools required to follow any standard of education or rigors of teacher training. Many of these schools lack the necessary resources, programs, and accommodations to support children with disabilities, special learning needs, or those from marginalized communities. Public schools, by contrast, are required to provide services for all students, and we should be working to strengthen these schools rather than diverting funds that could help them serve every child.

The true focus should be on improving our public schools, not funneling taxpayer dollars into private institutions. Public education is a right, and every child deserves access to high-quality education, regardless of their zip code or family income. Instead of pursuing policies that undermine the very system that serves nearly 95% of our students, we should be investing in and continuing growth in our public schools to ensure that they are adequately funded, equipped with skilled teachers, and able to offer a broad range of programs that meet the needs of all students.

We have some great public schools. Public schools are at the heart of our communities. School choice vouchers harm schools and will harm communities.

This bill fails to address the systemic issues in education and places the burden of choice on families who are already struggling. I urge the Senate to reconsider this approach and prioritize policies that work for all students, not just those who are fortunate enough to navigate the complexities of the voucher system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Trista Ziegelmann