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**Testimony of
Matt Perdue
North Dakota Farmers Union
In Opposition to SB 2400
House Education Committee
March 18, 2025**

Chairman Heinert and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2400. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU). NDFU respectfully opposes SB 2400.

SB 2400 establishes a new Education Savings Account (ESA) Fund. The fund would provide \$500 to \$3,500 per student to cover the cost of qualified educational expenses. Those qualified expenses include tuition and fees for nonpublic education, textbooks and materials for education outside the traditional classroom, test fees, school meals and more.

NDFU's member-driven Policy & Action states, "We are opposed to the public funding of private schools." Currently, there are only 60 private schools in North Dakota—located in just 17 counties¹, most of which are urban—while public schools serve 90% of the state's students, including most rural counties. Most rural students simply do not have access to private schools and rely on the strong public schools that are pillars of our rural communities. While we appreciate efforts to increase funding for education, we believe those funds should be devoted to addressing the many needs of our public school system.

We further believe any new ESA should provide equitable payments to students at public and nonpublic schools. The legislation provides up to \$3,500 per student for students attending nonpublic schools but only provides \$500 for students attending public schools. This disparity disadvantages rural students, who already face higher costs in accessing additional educational opportunities due to travel and other factors.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a "Do Not Pass" recommendation on SB 2400. Thank you for your consideration.

¹North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Data*. <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/data>