

## Testimony in Support of HB 1624 – Universal School Meals

January 21, 2026

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Tracey Miller**, and I am a parent of children who attend a private Catholic school in **Bismarck, North Dakota**. I am writing in support of **HB 1624**, and specifically to emphasize the importance of keeping **nonpublic schools included** in this legislation. Families who choose nonpublic education are North Dakota families, and our children are North Dakota children. Preserving the option for nonpublic schools to participate reflects our shared values of fairness, inclusion, and support for all students—because at the end of the day, we are all North Dakotans.

Each morning when I drop my children off at school, I am struck by how many other working parents I see doing the very same thing—juggling jobs, schedules, and responsibilities, all while trying to provide the very best environment possible for their children. These moments are a reminder that families across North Dakota, regardless of background or income, are doing their best to raise healthy, engaged, and supported kids.

When we talk about nonpublic schools, it's important to remember the real families behind them—working parents making thoughtful, sometimes difficult decisions in the best interest of their children. Choosing a school today is very different than it was historically. In recent years, education has become more polarized, and agendas are increasingly pushed on children at younger and younger ages. For our family, a Catholic education aligns with our values and provides a stable, values-based environment where our children can learn, grow, and thrive.

We are deeply grateful to live in a state like North Dakota—where we have strong school systems, exceptional educators, and incredibly hardworking school staff across both public and nonpublic schools.

HB 1624 represents a practical, unifying way to support families across our state. I strongly support its passage and encourage lawmakers to preserve the option for nonpublic schools to participate.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully,

**Tracey Miller**

Bismarck, North Dakota

Parent of Light of Christ Catholic Schools Student(s)