

March 13, 2025

To the Members of the Committee:

I write to you as both an educator with 15 years of experience and a mother of children who attend a public rural school to express my vehement opposition to HB 1540. While I understand the desire to offer more educational choice, I believe this bill is counterintuitive to achieving that goal. This bill would be a detriment to public schools, particularly in rural areas, and would ultimately harm the students who rely on North Dakota's public schools for their education.

As an educator who has spent over a decade in the classroom, I have seen firsthand how critical public schools are to the success of all students. Public schools are the backbone of our communities, providing vital services to children of all backgrounds, including those with special needs, those from low-income families, and those in rural areas where options for educational choice are already limited. Redirecting public funds to private schools would disproportionately affect rural districts, which already face funding disparities and resource challenges. Decreasing the funding for these schools would further widen the gap between urban and rural education, leading to discrepancies in educational outcomes.

As a mother, I am deeply invested in the quality of education my children receive. Their rural school district provides an exceptional education, thanks to the unwavering dedication of its teachers, staff, and administrators. Year after year, these educators go above and beyond, at times going so far as to spend their own money to ensure students have what they need to succeed. Despite inadequate budget increases, the staff and administration remain committed to fostering a strong learning environment. Diverting public funds to private schools would only deepen any financial strain on public schools, making it difficult for teachers to do the incredible work they already accomplish with limited resources. This would be detrimental to the teaching profession as well as teacher retention. I want my kids to have teachers who have the resources they need to focus on doing their job well year after year. Furthermore, many families in our state do not have access to private schools due to lack of proximity. Weakening public school funding would not only jeopardize student success but also diminish our state's long-term educational and economic potential.

Instead of diverting public funds to private schools, we should be focusing on improving and adequately funding our public education system. For years, North Dakota public education has been exceptional. Our children deserve to continue receiving the best possible education, and that can only be achieved by ensuring our public schools have the resources they need to succeed. This includes investing in teachers to increase retention, classroom curricula, technology, and supplies, and the services that public schools provide to every student.

I urge you to consider the long-term impact of HB 1540 on all ND citizens, but especially on rural schools and the students who depend on them. Please stand with educators, parents, and communities to protect the future of public education and ensure that every child, regardless of their background or where they live, has access to a high-quality education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mallory Brown

Mother

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