

## **Do NOT Pass - HB 1540 school ESAs/vouchers**

Dear Chairman Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee,

I strongly urge a Do NOT Pass on HB 1540 - vouchers for private schools (ESAs).

NO public tax dollars should be given to private schools.

While this bill provides \$4,082/private school student, it could be more if the state allocates more to the public school per pupil funding being this bill states 50% of that amount would go to each private school student Educational Savings Account (ESA) or commonly called voucher.

Cost estimates for this bill is an estimated \$70 million dollars per biennium - an unbelievable sum to go only to private school students, who make up only approximately 7% of the ND K-12 student population. In addition, I strongly oppose the \$3.5 million in this bill for a marketing campaign to promote private schools. Public tax dollars should not be used for marketing private schools.

HB 1540, if passed, would undermine public schools leading to reduced funding of our public schools in ND at a time when our schools are in need of additional funding to address shortages of teachers and staff, including bus drivers and paraprofessionals. This bill would be particularly bad for rural areas of ND who do not have access to a private school within a reasonable driving distance, taking their tax dollars with no benefit.

- Private schools are not required to follow the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Private schools can set their own "standards" for admission, turning away children with special needs.
- Private schools are not required to provide children with special needs any accommodations or special services.
- Test scores cannot be compared due to differences in assessment standards and outcome measures between public and private schools.

In a new development, I am concerned about the impact to the budget for ND public schools given likely cuts to federal funding provided to ND schools from the Department of Education and also cuts from the US Department of Agriculture for schools to purchase food from local farmers and producers.

If parents want to send their children to private schools, that is their choice to fund themselves. I should not have to pay for their choice.

Our ND Constitution mandates that each child in ND be provided with a free public education and that no public tax dollars be allocated to private schools. ND has excellent public schools and teachers and support staff. We need to support our public schools and not undercut their funding and undermine them, but instead support public schools, the teachers and most importantly the students who attend our public schools.

I urge a Do NOT Pass on HB 1540.

Thank you.  
Connie Hoffman  
3336 Jackson St S  
Fargo, ND 58104