

Chairman Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee,

I have taught in North Dakota public schools for the past 39 years. I have witnessed educators working tremendously hard to help students succeed and become productive and creative citizens North Dakota can be proud of calling its own.

Public schools welcome every child. As a parent, I observed how my children flourished under the guidance of caring teachers. Public education is the great equalizer in our society: it gives access to every child in rural and urban areas. Students from all economic backgrounds are offered the same opportunities.

The millions of dollars this bill would cost to taxpayers would subsidize school tuition for only a small group of parents. This much needed funding could provide endless opportunities for so many of our children in public schools.

Let us channel tax dollars towards investing in our public schools. Let's keep our focus on providing resources for mental health services and qualified staff that enhance the education of every child.

Vouchers in other States have proven to benefit only a few and have not translated into a formula of success for the majority of students. This bill would reduce resources available to public schools and weaken their capacity to serve EVERY student (regardless of their ability or economic background).

As a citizen who lives on a farm in a rural area, I foresee that this bill would benefit students in urban areas and would certainly create a funding structure not based on equity.

Please vote NO on HB 1540.

Respectfully,
Alicia Bata