

March 14, 2025

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 1540, which seeks to implement an educational voucher program in North Dakota. As a dedicated educator with 21 years of experience working in a North Dakota public school, and as a parent of six children who have all graduated from the North Dakota public school system, I firmly believe that public funds should remain in public schools.

Public education is the foundation of a strong, equitable society. Voucher programs divert critical resources away from public schools, leading to reduced funding, fewer resources, and a diminished quality of education for the majority of students. Since state funding is allocated on a per-pupil basis, every student who utilizes a voucher takes funding away from their local public school, forcing budget cuts, staff reductions, and fewer opportunities for the children who remain in the public system.

Furthermore, vouchers do not ensure equal access to quality education. Private schools are not required to accept all students, particularly those with disabilities or special needs, leaving some of our most vulnerable students with even fewer options. Additionally, vouchers often fail to cover the full cost of private tuition, meaning that low-income families are less likely to benefit from these programs, while wealthier families receive public funds to supplement their private school choices.

Accountability and transparency are also significant concerns. Unlike public schools, private institutions that receive voucher funds are not held to the same rigorous standards, making it difficult to assess how taxpayer dollars are spent or whether students are receiving a high-quality education. Public schools are required to meet strict educational standards and provide services for all students, whereas private schools operate under fewer regulations with little oversight.

Beyond financial and accountability concerns, voucher programs risk increasing segregation within our education system. Private schools can be selective in their admissions, leading to stratification based on socioeconomic status, race, or religious affiliation. Public education should foster diversity and inclusion, ensuring that all students, regardless of backgrounds, have access to the same quality of education.

Ultimately, voucher programs undermine the public education system by shifting funds away from schools that serve the majority of North Dakota's students. Public schools are not businesses; they are pillars of our communities, tasked with educating every child, regardless of ability or background. Our focus should be on strengthening our public education system, not diverting resources to private interests!

I urge you to vote against House Bill 1540 and to continue supporting policies that invest in and improve our public schools. Our children, families, and communities deserve a strong and well-funded public education system that benefits all, not just a select few.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angel Lindseth