

Dear North Dakota Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1540, which proposes allowing state public funds to be used for private schools. As a dedicated public school teacher with over 30 years of experience in the classroom, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that adequate funding has on student success, teacher retention, and school resources. Diverting public funds to private institutions would have devastating consequences for our public education system, further widening the gap between public and private students.

Public schools serve **all** students, regardless of socioeconomic status, ability, or background. They are the backbone of our communities, providing not only education but also meals, counseling, special education services, and extracurricular activities that shape well-rounded individuals. Every dollar given away to private schools—many of which are not held to the same accountability and transparency standards—weakens the ability of public schools to fulfill these critical roles.

As someone who has dedicated a lifetime to public education, I have already seen the strain of underfunding in our schools: outdated textbooks, insufficient support, and buildings in dire need of repair. Instead of funneling public money into private institutions that can selectively admit students, we should be strengthening our commitment to public schools, ensuring every child has access to a high-quality education regardless of where they live or what their family's financial standing may be.

Furthermore, the proposed bill undermines the fundamental principle of public education—that taxpayer dollars should be used to support institutions that serve **all** students, not just a select few. Private schools are not required to accept students; public schools are. Public money should be invested in schools that are open and accessible to all, not in schools that can exclude students based on their own set of criteria. Shifting public funds to private schools does not accomplish these goals; rather, it weakens the institutions that serve the vast majority of our state's children.

I urge you to vote against HB 1540 and instead advocate for policies that invest in the future of public education. Our students, teachers, and, most importantly, our communities depend on a strong, well-funded public school system. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jean R. Bartz, M.Ed.

Drake Anamoose High School