

Testimony on HB 1540

Chair Beard and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am Daniel Rice from Fargo and retired Dean and Professor of Education from the University of North Dakota. (My views expressed here are not intended to represent those of the university.) I write in OPPOSITION to HB 1540.

1. The citizens of North Dakota have consistently rejected the use of tax payer funds for private schools since the adoption of our State Constitution. This remains true today as validated by several polls.
2. It is clear that the legislature should respect the will of the majority of citizens and not divert public funds to parents who support private schools or parents who chose to home school their children.
3. The State Constitution requires the state to provide public schools for ALL of the children of the state. If parents chose to reject the opportunity of free public education for their children, they are obligated to bear the cost of that rejection. The state should not reward them for rejecting public schooling.
4. The *public* schools are the constitutional and only responsibility of the state. The public schools in North Dakota face shortages of qualified teachers, financial challenges, and in many cases, inadequate and outdated facilities and equipment. It is irresponsible for the state to divert funds away from the public schools to parents who support private schools or who chose to home school their children. The administrative cost alone for an educational savings account program is estimated to be \$3million per biennium.
5. By diverting public funds for non-public educational experiences, children may be taught ideologies and theories that are not in the public interest, for example anti-science concepts such as “creationism,” false narratives about US history, anti-democratic political concepts such as Christian Nationalism. Parents who endorse these views should not expect the state to pay to support them.

For all of these and other reasons, I urge the committee to give HB 1540 a DO NOT PASS recommendation.

Daniel Rice, retired Dean and Professor of Education, UND