

Dear Chairman Heinert, Chairman Beard & Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing in opposition to HB1540 which would set up an Educational Savings Account for non-public school students. I would ask for a “no” vote on HB1540.

On Feb. 25, 2025, the following statement was shared in support of HB1540 on the House Floor before the members voted. “Scholarships, ESAs, and vouchers are a few examples of mechanisms that can make school choice a reality for every family; leveling the playing field and providing equal opportunities for all students.”

These types of statements are a false narrative coming from lobbyists, outside interests, and our legislators supporting the plan to fund non-public schools by way of ESAs and vouchers. Ironically, it is the non-public schools that HOLD ALL THE CARDS because they do not accept every child to attend. Some families are devastated when their child is not accepted or no longer allowed to attend the school in which they have made the choice to attend. No entrance for orthopedic needs, severe learning disabilities, behavioral needs, English language learners, severe speech/language, severe neurodivergent disorders, attendance factors, etc. Our non-public school administrators will testify about students they do accept with special needs or IEPs, but it is very few and with minimal specialty services.

When public tax dollars from government funds are used to fund a non-public school, our citizens should expect those schools to ACCEPT ALL students. Accepting all students would provide “equal opportunities for all students” as stated on the House Floor. If public dollars are made available to help families afford tuition costs, then ANY child should be accepted. This would “level the playing field”.

In our larger North Dakota cities, the choice for a different academic setting is already available. Here again, this does not “provide equal opportunities for all students” as our rural communities don’t have this choice with HB1540. The narrative coming from legislators setting this bill will “provide equal opportunities” is not accurate.

I ask you to VOTE NO on HB1540

Amy Neal

Kindergarten Teacher & 2016 ND Teacher of the Year