

I am writing to express opposition to North Dakota House Bill 1540. This bill would divert essential public funds away from our public schools to private and nonpublic institutions, ultimately undermining the strength and equity of our public education system.

Public education is the backbone of our communities, ensuring that every child—regardless of socioeconomic background—has access to quality education. HB 1540 would shift money away from public schools benefiting a select few at the expense of the vast majority of students. At a time when public schools are already struggling with underfunding, teacher shortages, and outdated facilities, redirecting funds to private institutions exacerbates these challenges and widens the educational divide.

This legislation poses significant concerns for several reasons:

Diversion of Public Funds – The bill allocates millions of taxpayer dollars to education accounts, directly reducing the resources available to public schools. These funds could instead be used to improve infrastructure, support teachers, and enhance learning programs that benefit all students.

Lack of Accountability – Unlike public schools, which are subject to oversight by elected school boards and state education agencies, private institutions that benefit from ESAs are not held to the same transparency standards. Without proper regulation, there is a heightened risk of financial mismanagement and misuse of funds, with little accountability for student outcomes.

Increased Inequality – The ESA program disproportionately benefits families who can already afford private education, leaving lower-income students in underfunded public schools. This move will deepen existing disparities, as those who can supplement ESA funds with personal resources will have greater educational opportunities than those who cannot.

Erosion of Public School Quality – By siphoning funding from public schools, this bill weakens the very institutions that serve the majority of North Dakota's children. Public schools are already facing staffing shortages and rising operational costs; further reductions in funding will only lead to larger class sizes, fewer extracurricular activities, and diminished academic resources.

While I fully support the right of parents to choose the best educational path for their children, public tax dollars should be invested in strengthening public schools, not in subsidizing private education with limited oversight.

I urge you to vote against HB 1540 and instead advocate for policies that invest in public education, ensuring that every child in North Dakota has access to high-quality, well-funded schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and to your support in preserving and enhancing our public education system.

Andy Bertsch
District 5 Resident