

Dear Members of the House,

I want to begin this by thanking you for your consideration of HB1540, and I want to share with you the reasons that I encourage a Do Pass on any bill concerning school choice.

I am not from Minot, North Dakota, nor did I ever imagine myself here long term. I grew up in a suburb outside Minneapolis and chose to attend college in Bismarck. I fell in love with the culture of North Dakota – the people, the simplicity, the subtle beauty – but the quality that encouraged me to stay long term was the community of faith I found among Catholics in Bismarck. I knew I wanted to start my family in this state.

In college, I majored in English Education, and in an attempt to save some money, I decided to stay with a friend's family and do my student teaching at Bishop Ryan. I never intended to stay in Minot more than a few months, but it was the community at Bishop Ryan that embraced me and made me feel so comfortable. I ended up marrying my husband, a Minot native, and we've since had three kids. A four-month stint student teaching led to seven years, a home, and careers at Bishop Ryan Catholic School.

My husband and I both teach at Bishop Ryan because we love the school, the students, the families, and most importantly, the faith community. As teachers, relatively early in our careers, we don't make a lot of money, but we make that sacrifice because of our love for the school. This year, our first child is enrolled at Bishop Ryan. We feel so fortunate to be able to send him, but the reality is, we are only able to do so because of our jobs at the school. This strong desire that we have as parents would not be realized if we weren't teaching there. I know there are many families who are unable to make the decision to attend Catholic Schools for financial reasons, but who have a deep desire to. This bill would give those families a choice in the matter of their child's education, a choice that belongs to the parents.

This bill is not intended to line the pockets of the already wealthy. Being within the walls of the school, I know firsthand that many of our students do not come from wealth but instead come from hardworking families that make significant financial sacrifices. Please consider these families and families like mine when voting on this bill.

Thank you for your work on the education committee!

Bailey Wald