

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

RE: Support for HB1540

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong **support** for **HB1540** as a parent of five children and taxpayer.

OUR EXPERIENCE with public and private schools:

We started our children in the public school system as a secondary choice. Financially we were in a position where we exceeded the income level to receive tuition assistance from the private schools, but the tuition would be a struggle to maintain our financial goals. In our experience, the teachers and staff at the public school were great and our children loved their friends.

In 2020, we moved our children over to private school as we did not want to do the “hybrid” option for COVID regulations. At the time, we had one child who struggled in the large classroom setting. Teacher after teacher told us, “he is a really good kid, he is just about 6 months behind everyone else.” We had special health & learning assessments done for him and extra staff working with him at the public school. When we moved to private school we were afraid we would miss the “extra” support. However, the lower class numbers and smaller setting was a big chance for him to thrive. He went from working hard to barely pass, to now getting almost all As and advancing on state testing.

Our second son was the opposite. He was always “ahead” of everyone else. He completed assignments rapidly and was rarely challenged. When we moved into the private school he had the opportunity to take faster tracks and do more challenging work to keep his learning at his speed.

Beyond the smaller class sizes and opportunity to work ahead, being able to merge COVID regulations happened to be a blessing to us with motivation to make the sacrifice and move to private education.

TAXPAYERS BENEFIT:

This is not just a benefit for the families who go to private education. The money saved with the passage of HB1540 will positively be impacting local businesses, schools, and organizations.

For example:

- We live in a community that is very family friendly. Year after year we have numerous kids coming to our door selling something or another. In the past, we have declined some of these sales requests as we had our own fundraising to do. If we had the extra savings on tuition costs, we would freely support these children in their sports, activities and ambitions.

- Savings on tuition would allow our family to have more consistent family memberships throughout the community - YMCA, Gateway to Science, Tennis Center, Dakota Zoo, etc. This would not only benefit our family with positive experiences, but these organizations as well.
- An Education Savings Account program would allow our family to give larger donations to the non-profits that we know are well deserving. This will further benefit the community beyond education.
- If HB1540 was passed, our family would be able to support more local businesses, stores, and restaurants.

We know that Public Schools are a great option. We also know many, like us 5 years ago, do not move their kids to where they want to go because of the financial burden. Please vote YES to HB1540 to create and enact a new chapter to title 15.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to an education savings account program; to provide an appropriation; and to provide an effective date.

Sincerely,

BriAnna Wanner

Bismarck, ND