

I am a parent and a public school teacher. I am writing to urge you to please vote NO on HB1540. This bill threatens the integrity of our public education system. I am strongly against using public taxpayer dollars for private schools. Public funds should remain in public schools, where they serve all students, regardless of ability, background, or financial status. As a public school educator, I know that if a child moves into our district, we are required to accept them no matter the cost to our district. That same child could very easily be denied by a private school if they carry a "high price tag" for educating them. Private schools openly reject students for a variety of reasons, ranging from disability to socioeconomic status. In short, private schools are not held to the same transparency, accountability, or accessibility standards as our public schools.

Furthermore, only 32% of North Dakota counties have access to a private school. 93% of North Dakota students attend public schools. Rural North Dakotans will foot the bill to send kids in big cities like Grand Forks, Fargo, & Bismarck, to private schools.

Our public schools are the foundation of our communities, and instead of diverting resources away from them, we should be investing in smaller class sizes, support staff, mental health resources, and competitive wages for educators.

I strongly urge you to vote NO on this voucher bill and to stand with North Dakota's students, families, and educators in preserving a strong public education system.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your service to our state and look forward to your support in keeping public dollars in public schools.

Kathy Houser