

To: Members of the Senate Education Committee

From: Aaron Schramm, Parent

Date: March 16, 2025

I am a parent of three children that my wife and I have raised and continue raising in northeast North Dakota. My wife and I have lived in various parts of the state from Williston to Grand Forks to rural Cass County. At each of those larger communities and areas, there were options for educating a child – public and private. In some cases, a private school may have been a better option than public school and, in some cases, public school was a better option than private school. In 2012, my wife and I made the decision to move to a rural community in Walsh County because we felt it was a great place to raise and educate our young family. We were right. Rural North Dakota has provided lots of opportunities for my kids, including a quality public education.

I am currently a resident and property owner in Walsh County, and I willingly pay taxes to maintain a good quality of life. I live in a modest home, drive used vehicles, and I don't own or have a lake place to frequent in the summer. I have had to make choices on what I make as a priority for my family. The one thing I never had to worry about was whether my kids were getting an equitable educational opportunity. HB 1540 puts that reality in jeopardy. As a rural North Dakota parent, I will never have a chance to benefit from HB 1540 as its focuses is on private school education.

If HB 1540 passes, some of my tax dollars will go to a private school in a metro area of the state as almost all private schools are located in one of those areas. Families in one of these metro areas will receive a benefit from my tax dollars that families in my part of the state will not benefit from. What compounds this reality is that these state funds will take away significant funding from public schools, where my kids go to school. This will undoubtedly become an equity issue for all families in rural North Dakota.

One may argue that parents that send their children to private schools don't benefit from some of their tax dollars as well. The difference is that those parents have a choice of where to educate their child. Most of rural North Dakota does not have that choice, yet HB 1540 asks us to pay for the choices of metro area families without having the same choices. That is not equitable. I am urging you to vote no on HB 1540.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Aaron Schramm  
Rural ND Parent