

North Dakota Legislature
Senate Education Committee
March 17, 2025

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong OPPOSITION to HB 1540. This bill, which would allow public funds to be used for the support of sectarian (religious) schools and students/ directly conflicts with the North Dakota Constitution, specifically Article VIII, Section 5.

The North Dakota Constitution mandates that our state provide a "uniform system of free public schools" and explicitly prohibits the use of public funds for the support of sectarian schools. Article VIII, Section 5 of the North Dakota Constitution states:

"No public funds shall be used for the support of any sectarian school."

This clear language was included in our state constitution to ensure that taxpayer money is used for the benefit of public education and not diverted to support private, religious institutions. Our public schools serve all children, regardless of academic abilities or religious or cultural backgrounds, and are an essential cornerstone of our democracy. Allowing public funds to flow to religious schools undermines this principle and opens the door for potential divisiveness, inequity, and the erosion of the public school system.

Furthermore, this bill could create a significant financial burden on the state, leading to reduced resources for our public schools. Public funds should be used to strengthen and enhance our public education system, ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education, regardless of their background or religious affiliation.

I respectfully urge the committee to reject HB 1540 and uphold the protections enshrined in the North Dakota Constitution. Our state has a long-standing commitment to public education, and it is crucial that we maintain that commitment by ensuring that public funds are used exclusively to support our public schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
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