

Olivia Data  
Testimony Opposing HB 1540  
March 17 2025

Greetings, Chairman Beard and members of the committee,

My name is Olivia Data, and I was born and raised in North Dakota. I grew up in Bismarck, and I attended Highland Acres Elementary School, Horizon Middle School, and Century High School. I am now a student at Harvard University.

I greatly benefitted from a public school education. I had excellent teachers, and I appreciated the variety of perspectives which public school allowed me access to.

However, rather than bolstering the resources of our public schools, HB 1540 would divert public funds to private schools. Public funds should be used for public services, and especially in a time of great challenges to our schools and teachers, we should be *increasing*, not decreasing, public school funding. Our state is already facing teacher shortages, post-COVID behavioral issues, and funding inequalities between rural and urban schools<sup>1</sup>. Providing taxpayer funding for private schools will not only worsen these problems but will show countless teachers and students in North Dakota that our legislature cares more for the privileges of the few than the opportunities of the many.

Please, protect our public schools by continuing to support the use of public funds for public resources. As a former North Dakota public school student and a current concerned citizen, I ask you to oppose HB 1540.

Thank you for your time in reviewing this testimony.

Sincerely,  
Olivia Data

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<sup>1</sup>*Solutions for the Teacher Shortage in North Dakota*, Ricky Feir and Ethan Liu. North Dakota State University, February 2024: 5.  
[https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/challeyinstitute/Solutions\\_for\\_the\\_Teacher\\_Shortage\\_in\\_North\\_Dakota.pdf](https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/challeyinstitute/Solutions_for_the_Teacher_Shortage_in_North_Dakota.pdf);  
McCann, Adam. 2023. "Most & Least Equitable School Districts in North Dakota." WalletHub. September 7, 2023.  
<https://wallethub.com/edu/e/most-least-equitable-school-districts-in-north-dakota/77116>.