

## **Opposition to HB1540**

My name is Cameron Wahlstrom and I serve as the elected School Board President of the Alexander Public School District. As both an elected official and a taxpayer, I am here to voice my strong opposition to House Bill 1540. I have serious concerns about the fundamental fairness and transparency issues raised by this bill.

As a public school district, we operate with full transparency because we are funded by public tax dollars. Our budgets, expenditures, policies, and decisions are accessible to the public. Our school board meetings are open, and our financial records are available for public scrutiny. This accountability is essential because we are entrusted with taxpayer money to educate the children of our communities.

I also serve as a board member for McKenzie Electric Cooperative. While this cooperative is not funded by public tax dollars, it ensures financial transparency for its members by law. If an organization funded privately has to have open financials to prove it is a nonprofit, it is entirely unacceptable that private schools benefiting from taxpayer dollars should not be held to the same standard.

This bill fundamentally contradicts long-standing tax law principles. Public funds require public oversight. If taxpayer money is allocated to any educational institution, whether public, private, or otherwise, it must come with full transparency and accountability measures.

As a public school district, we strongly believe that every student deserves a high-quality education, and we respect parental choice in education. However, that choice should not come at the expense of transparency and fairness. If a private school wants to receive public money, it should abide by the same rules as public schools.

I urge this committee to reject HB 1540 unless it includes clear provisions requiring open financial records, open meetings, and accountability standards for all participating schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.