



1 **Testimony in Opposition to SB 2241– Public Charters**

2 I appreciate the opportunity to present my concerns regarding SB2241, which proposes the  
3 authorization of public charter schools in North Dakota. While the intention to enhance  
4 educational opportunities is commendable, I believe that introducing charter schools may not be  
5 the most suitable path for our state. My reservations are rooted in the potential negative impacts  
6 on our existing public education system and the unique characteristics of our communities.

7 **1. Financial Implications for Public Schools**

8 Charter schools, though publicly funded, often divert essential resources from traditional public  
9 schools. In North Dakota, where many school districts already operate under tight budgets, this  
10 reallocation could exacerbate financial strains. Public schools have fixed costs—such as facility  
11 maintenance and staffing—that do not decrease proportionally with declining student enrollment.  
12 The introduction of charter schools could lead to reduced funding for these essential services,  
13 thereby diminishing the quality of education for the majority of our students.

14 **2. Impact on Rural Communities**

15 North Dakota's rural communities rely heavily on their public schools, which often serve as  
16 central hubs for community activities and identity. The establishment of charter schools could  
17 undermine these institutions by drawing away students and resources, potentially leading to rural  
18 school fiscal detriment. This would not only affect educational outcomes but also erode the  
19 social fabric that binds our rural communities together.

20 **5. Fiscal Impact to the State Underscored.**

21 The fiscal note on the bill shows that the avg. student in ND is weighted at 1.2, so they get 120% of the  
22 state payment. Mr. Tescher has indicated the state would realize a 20% savings on average if the student  
23 had previously attended a public school.

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25 However, we need to dig into the potential actual cost to the state. The large school districts receive a  
26 weighted factor of 1.0. However, the state does not send the full \$11,072 to districts, it is reduced by to  
27 subtract the dollars raised by the 60-mill local levy. - - - Since most of the large schools only receive  
28 \$7,000-\$8,000 per pupil after being adjusted for the local 60-mill levy, wouldn't it be fair to say that it is  
29 likely to carry a state fiscal note if there is no taxable authority to cover the local share?

30 **6. Unrecognized innovation and work of our public schools.**



1 Our public schools in North Dakota have done measurable and outstanding work in the past 4-6  
2 years regarding innovation and attention to personalized learning which begets the question of  
3 the need for a bill such as this. If this is a carve-out to help out in part our friends from Twin  
4 Buttes, I have believe we could find an answer for them that doesn't open an entire can of worms  
5 that this might.

6 Please acknowledge the work ou r schools have done and so many more that I haven't even bee  
7 able to document here. So much of this work is done by the innovation academy hosted by  
8 NDCEL.

9 Central Cass – Jag academy, BPS – empower ed, Mandan – Blended online innovation  
10 and personalization for every student, Oaks and Legacy – Flex-Mod Scheduling, Belcourt –  
11 Trauma informed instruction, Williston – Innovation Academy, Dickinson – by school adjusting  
12 structure to personalize for the student and teacher, Jamestown – personalized competency-based  
13 learning increasing student choice and voice, Richardton-Taylor – personalized learning  
14 academy, Garrison & Numerous others – apprenticeship learning. This is just a sample. The  
15 Learning continuum that the legislature passed gives every district the pathway toward  
16 answering their community's needs without watering down efforts toward funding or realizing  
17 those needs.

18 In conclusion, while the pursuit of educational innovation is important, the introduction of  
19 charter schools in North Dakota, as proposed in House Bill 1358, presents significant risks to our  
20 public education system and communities. We've made such strong moves toward innovation in  
21 the past 2-3 legislative sessions, and I fear that the turn on our heels this session toward charter  
22 and vouchers and school choice will send us decades back in growth for the overwhelming  
23 majority of our students. I urge the Legislative Assembly to consider these concerns carefully  
24 and to explore alternative methods of improving education that strengthen, rather than potentially  
25 weaken, our existing public schools.

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