

Senate Bill 2295
Senate Education Committee - Sen. Todd Beard, Chair
February 4, 2025
Testimony in Opposition to SB 2295

Chairman Beard and Members of the Senate Education Committee, I am Vicki Voldal Rosenau, a parent and lifelong resident of Valley City, ND. Thank you for this opportunity to offer my testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 2295.

Yesterday Supt. Kirsten Baesler addressed this committee regarding a recent Presidential Executive Order on enhancing educational freedom and opportunities. In North Dakota, the only logical and responsible way for education planners to expand such opportunities is to build on the considerable (and commendable) targeted investments that the State has very recently made in educational innovations WITHIN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS SYSTEM.

Because HB 2295 would actually undermine that system, it should be rejected. In support of this position, I would like to offer four points:

- 1) A strong majority (68%) of the ND voters whom you represent do NOT want any diversion of public money to pay for private "school" tuition. Yet, 65% of voters do support increased spending for Public schools.
<https://www.kvrr.com/2025/01/06/north-dakota-united-survey-show-residents-oppose-private-tuition-vouchers/>
<https://northdakotamonitor.com/2025/01/06/poll-north-dakotans-support-free-school-lunches-sour-on-public-dollars-for-private-tuition/>
<https://ndunited.org/news-media-center/press-releases/new-polling-highlights-north-dakotans-priorities-expectations>
- 2) There is strong evidence that academic achievement is actually LOWERED for students who are removed from Public schools and instead placed in private facilities. At best, research is inadequate and conflicted. As James Vukelic of Bismarck has publicly stated, "**Apparently, when it comes to homeschooled students we really don't know, to quote former President George W. Bush, 'Is our children learning?'**" https://bismarcktribune.com/opinion/letters/letter-serious-research-needed-before-spending-public-money-on-school-vouchers/article_4d1376c8-da71-11ef-9b48-b399fe74e40a.html
- 3) Nobody has a "right" to demand tax dollars for their family's use of private schooling facilities. That's because, when the public as a whole has **covenanted** to provide a certain service for everyone (**by collectively paying taxes for that purpose**), then no person has the right to demand that we all help to pay for a private "alternative facility" just because that individual prefers it. Furthermore, if an individual deems any public service to be of unacceptably-low quality, it is his **civic duty** to roll-up-his-sleeves and help the community as a whole to upgrade that service in accordance with the will of the majority. That's local democracy in action, and that's what our wonderful nation was founded upon.
- 4) The claim that ND can appropriate TAX dollars for private schooling without defunding cash-strapped Public schools is flatly dishonest. Allocating our finite tax dollars IS a "zero-sum game," because taxpayers cannot and will not go along with paying ever-increasing taxes. Future allocations for Public schools will inevitably be lessened if ANY tax dollars are diverted to private facilities.

Particularly in light of the challenges described by Supt. Baesler, we need to work together to strengthen our currently underfunded public schools, instead of siphoning off public money for non-public entities. As you heard in compelling testimony yesterday morning, public schools across the state are already creating wonderfully-innovative educational opportunities for all our students. Let's redouble those already-launched initiatives in order to meet the demand for increased educational opportunities – all within our traditional public school system.