

1 SB 2303– ESA Bill

2 Mandan Public Schools – Mike Bitz, Superintendent

3 Good morning, Chairman Beard and members of the Senate
4 Education Committee. For the record, my name is Mike Bitz. I
5 am fortunate to serve as the superintendent for Mandan Public
6 Schools. Thank you for all you do to support education in ND. I
7 am here today to oppose SB2303. I will be brief.

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9 This bill appropriates \$243,000,000 to private schools without
10 private schools having to account for a nickel of how the
11 appropriation is spent. The only fiscal accountability is to give
12 the parent a receipt for the tuition and provide a bond
13 demonstrating that the school can pay its bills. – As a
14 Conservative and a ND taxpayer, I will tell you that this is not
15 only bad government, it is wrong. ND has great private schools,
16 with good people working in them, but giving anyone
17 \$243,000,000 without any fiscal accountability is a bad idea. If
18 you approve this bill, please put guardrails in place to ensure full
19 accountability for these dollars. The taxpayers of ND deserve
20 this.

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22 Also I find it confusing that the legislature is also considering a
23 parent’s rights bill, that in its current form will not apply to private

1 schools, even if they take public dollars. If private schools accept
2 public dollars, shouldn't we expect them to open their board
3 meetings and welcome parents to attend, and have the ability to
4 address the school board? Should parents really need to forfeit
5 their rights as parents if the private school chooses to admit their
6 child? **Accepting public dollars should mean accepting public**
7 **accountability!** The fact that there is a fiscal note on this bill
8 means these are public dollars.

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10 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I urge you
11 to vote NO on SB2303. At a minimum if you are going to approve
12 this bill, amend it and give taxpayers the fiscal accountability they
13 deserve. I would be happy to stand for any questions.