

Members of the ND Legislature,

My name is Perry Olson and along with my wife Melissa, I write today to express our support for HB 1540 and SB 2400 and the push for school choice to become more and more available in North Dakota. As you know, many states have already established great programs that give greater freedom to its citizens to educate how they see fit, using their own tax dollars to do so. The funding should follow the student, not the school. States like Arkansas, Tennessee, Wyoming, Florida, and West Virginia have got it right...and I am excited that North Dakota can soon join them with the passage of legislation.

As you well remember, the Legislature passed a school choice bill last session, but it was ultimately rejected by the former Governor saying it didn't go far enough. While I disagreed with his stance (I think it was a great starting point that could have been built upon), I respected Gov. Burgum's decision. Now, you have the chance to send meaningful, conservative, legislation to Governor Armstrong's desk.

Our children attend Bishop Ryan Catholic School in Minot. It is a choice we make because we feel the product delivered there is worth the price. The freedom to deliver a Christ-centered education is vital to our family. That said, we send our three children there at great expense to our family. The establishment of Educational Savings Accounts, with my tax dollars following my child, would be a great boost to our family and many like ours. I should state that my comments on private education don't mean I am not impressed with our state's public schools. I contend ND has some of the best in the land. We are fortunate for that. Bishop Ryan offers the Christ-centered curriculum, however, that public schools do not, and for the last decade a 'Classical' education style that has been a massive success at BRCS. If more people could benefit from this, the better off our state would be.

It is great that North Dakota doesn't need to re-invent the wheel with this concept. As stated before, we simply need to take the lead from the states across our country that have already implemented (very successfully I might add) their programs. This all comes down to freedom. I pay taxes to educate my children...but my children do not attend public schools. Those funds are not 'public' funds – they are taxpayer dollars. Each North Dakotan should have the ability to direct their funds to the school they see fit. As stated before, the funding should follow the student.

I look forward to following the action on this bill, and more than that, I thank you all for your service to our state. Whether or not you agree with me or not, I am thankful that you have dedicated your time to our wonderful state.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Perry Olson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Perry Olson
Minot, ND