



Contact:
Ryan Gregg, Lobbyist
rgregg@ndfu.org | 701-952-0104

Testimony
of
Ryan
Gregg
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
Senate Education Committee
February 5, 2025

Chairman Beard and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2400. My name is Ryan Gregg, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU). NDFU respectfully opposes SB 2400.

SB 2400 establishes a new Education Savings Account (ESA) Fund. The fund would provide \$1,000 to \$4,000 per student to cover the cost of qualified educational expenses. Those qualified expenses include tuition and fees for nonpublic education, textbooks and materials for education outside the traditional classroom, test fees, school meals and more.

NDFU's members do not support using ESAs to fund tuition at nonpublic schools. NDFU's member-driven Policy & Action states, "We are opposed to the public funding of private schools." Currently, there are only 60 private schools in North Dakota—located in just 17 counties¹, most of which are urban—while public schools serve 90% of the state's students, including most rural counties. Most rural students simply do not have access to private schools and rely on the strong public schools that are pillars of our rural communities.

We further believe any new ESA should provide equitable payments to students at public and nonpublic schools. The legislation provides up to \$4,000 per student for students attending nonpublic schools but only provides \$1,000 for students attending private schools. We believe that inequity undercuts rural students' access to the new educational opportunities the legislation seeks to create. Moreover, those additional educational opportunities are often more expensive for students to access due to travel costs and other factors.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a "Do Not Pass" recommendation on SB 2400. Thank you for your consideration.

¹North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). Data. <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/data>