

To: Senate Education Committee Members

From: Patrick Graff
Director of Legislative Policy, American Federation for Children

Re: Support for SB2400

Date: February 5th, 2025

On behalf of the American Federation for Children, the country's largest school choice organization, I would like to express our support for SB2400 which would create and Education Savings Account program in North Dakota and bring school choice to the state.

As all parents and teachers know, even children in the same family can have very different educational needs. We believe the children of North Dakota deserve a wide variety of publicly funded educational opportunities. Thirty-one states in addition to Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico have a private school choice program. North Dakota is one of three states with a Republican trifecta that does not have a choice program. The other two – Texas and Idaho – are both poised to pass new programs this year. We are excited to see movement to create new opportunities for students in North Dakota as well this year.

SB 2400 is a well-designed bill that includes a number of strong features that would ensure its success. The legislation incorporates features drawn from national model legislation that are tailored to meet the needs of students in North Dakota. I would like to highlight three of these features: 1) the bill provides parents with broad menu of approved items from which they may customize their child's education to meet their needs, including the novel inclusion of mental health; 2) the bill includes strong academic and financial accountability measures; and 3) the bill contains protections for the autonomy of private schools and parents to direct the education of their students.

Finally, this ESA would be the first of its kind in the country regarding the public-school portion of \$1,000 per student. This truly opens up educational freedom to all students – giving public school students access to extra educational supports while also giving options to others to choose a private school if they so choose.

The children of North Dakota should be given the choices available to students in majority of states in the union. Please pass SB 2400.