

January 30, 2023

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this statement in favor of ND House Bill 1532. As a parent of children who have gone through both parochial and public schools, I believe strongly that ND House Bill 1532 needs to be passed. I have 3 sons, the eldest of whom started his educational journey in the public school system, at a time when my husband and I couldn't afford private schooling. Through some extenuating circumstances, we decided public school was not providing the type of environment that we sought to raise our child in, and we made sacrifices to be able to enroll him in parochial school. Subsequently our two youngest children have also now gone through parochial school as well. While sacrifices needed to be made to make this happen for my we have never regretted gifting our children the privilege of parochial education.

The above being said. This is the United States, where we have certain freedoms granted to us under our beautiful Constitution. One of these freedoms is the freedom of religion. For my family and I, who have decided to raise our children in the Catholic faith and have them attend Catholic school. It is unfair to seemingly penalize a family who chooses parochial education, by basically charging them for education twice (public school through taxes) and private school through tuition. As one could imagine tuition can be costly, especially if more than one child is enrolled in parochial school at the same time. All ND citizens should have the choice to decide which schools are being funded through their hard-earned money.

If ND House Bill 1532 passes, this would allow us the ability to continue with a parochial education without worrying about financials. This would allow us (and others) the ability to possibly begin saving money for our children's higher education costs as well.

With a Catholic education, my children have not only lived and learned about humility, fortitude, graciousness, compassion, selflessness, and the spirit of giving... but these are lessons that they are putting out into their community as well. These lessons have been so well ingrained with the curriculum at parochial school, that their thoughts, beliefs, and willingness to help others rubs off onto those they come into contact with daily. Not only are they growing into productive members of society, but they are growing into the type of men you want as neighbors and friends. Now, if you want to talk about "North Dakota nice" come and talk to a child that has obtained their education from a parochial school in this great state. Those children put a whole different meaning into that phrase.

Money should not be a barrier to those who seek to provide their families with a religious education; Catholic or otherwise. By passing ND House Bill 1532 you will make a religious education something that is more attainable for those who want it, but cannot afford it. Passing ND House Bill 1532 will also put more money back into the pockets of those of us currently paying for parochial schools, enabling us to further support our parochial schools by keeping our children enrolled longer, and it can also allow us to save some of that money for future educational purposes for our children such as college. I implore you to please take these things into consideration when it comes to ND House Bill 1532.

Sincerely,

Stacy J. Johnston, RN

Grand Forks, ND