



January 31, 2023

House Education Committee
Coteau Room A/B, State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58554

Via Electronic Delivery

Re: ACU Supports Parental Choice in Education (HB 1532)

Members of the House Education Committee:

Nationwide, millions of students are struggling to catch up academically, while simultaneously dealing with mental and behavioral challenges stemming from pandemic-era isolation. With the growing presence of social activism in the classroom, declining test scores, and increases in mental health issues, it has never been more vital to empower parents to pick the best educational option for their kids.

Recently, Iowa, Utah, and Arizona have [all passed universal school choice](#) in the form of education savings accounts. North Dakota can join the growing list of states who fund students, not systems, by passing **HB 1532**, which offers tuition reimbursement of \$1500-\$3000 for parents who enroll their students in private schools.

Like most states, North Dakota saw deeply disappointing results in the 2022 National Assessment of Education Progress. [Reading levels](#) fell to their lowest point since 2002, while [math scores](#) saw their sharpest decline since the test was first administered.

Numerous studies on school choice demonstrate its successes in improving test scores and academic achievement both for students in alternative programs and those who remain in public schools. A study on the effectiveness of school choice found that school choice programs had a positive effect [in 31 of 33 cases](#). [A strong correlation](#) between state school choice laws and academic improvement makes a compelling case for the implementation of comprehensive school choice in every state.

School choice has not only found success in suburban and urban areas. From 2007-2019, rural Arizonans saw a [21 point increase](#) in math and reading test scores after K-12 Educational Scholarship Accounts (ESA) were introduced in 2011, while other schools across the country saw a decline by 2 points. Even post-pandemic, Arizona's rural schools have seen a [9 point increase](#) in test scores, while other rural areas outside Arizona dropped 17.

Even after expanding school choice, in rural areas most students continue to rely on public schools. For example, after Florida began offering private school scholarships, private school enrollment in rural areas [increased just 2.4%](#), and as the Wall Street Journal's Editorial Board [notes](#), "when unions that dominate school governance realize they don't have a monopoly on education finance, they may do more to improve the schools they run. And if they don't, parents will have the freedom and resources to do better by their children."

HB 1532 is a crucial start to help parents find the educational option that works best for their children. We have recommended to our colleagues at the American Conservative Union Foundation's [Center for Legislative Accountability](#) (Ratings) that they positively score bills expanding school choice in their 2023 ratings.

Thank you for your service in the North Dakota legislature,

Thomas R. Bradbury
Director of Advocacy & Policy
American Conservative Union

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