

**Testimony, North Dakota House
Education Committee – HB 1532
Presented: February 1, 2023 – 2:30 PM CST.
Presented by: Jacob Odermann**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee my name is Jacob Odermann. My wife AJ, our 4 children and myself are the 3rd and 4th generation to ranch on our family operation north of Belfield in Billings county. My children and I also represent the 2nd and 3rd generations that have attended Trinity High School in Dickinson.

I come to you today in support of HB 1532 not due to financial reasons but due to the value I believe parochial schools in our state provide.

I will note though, the Trinity Catholic schools alone represent \$6,184,500 in foundation aid payment savings with our 589 K-12 students.

I chose instead to focus on a more difficult thing to quantify, what value do parochial schools provide?

In a word – choice, and for families like mine, we not only cover our cost of tuition, but also the significant cost of transportation to and from school, most days this means over 100 miles of travel for family members.

School choice is incredibly important to families and it is why we as a state allow for open enrollment between districts. In Dickinson alone there are buses picking up students daily who travel to New England, South Heart and Richardton to attend school. Families choosing what is best for their children and their needed educational environment should be encouraged.

Our family currently resides in a district with no high school Trinity for 3 generations because of Trinity's ability to teach the whole student "Mind, Body and Soul".

Trinity and schools like it fill an important space for educational opportunities. High quality, accredited, faith-based education provides children the opportunity to learn math and science while also being able to learn about their faith on a day to day basis. Teaching morals and values which are essential in today's society.

Having an ability to ask in real time, questions regarding their faith and how it applies to other subjects is invaluable and promotes an ability to have respectful, thoughtful dialogue about conflicts that arise.

Titans see teachers and coaches do more with less everyday, individuals who believe in our mission, individuals who could have left for greener pastures.

Giving up earthly treasure for the minds, bodies and souls of their students. These individuals truly are models of Christ and give students an example of why giving of our time and talent is far more meaningful than any amount of financial wealth.

I believe my wife wishes these lessons hadn't taken such root when I explain to her how I've volunteered myself for yet another board or agreed to coach another team.

As representatives of your districts I thank you for modeling the same type of self sacrifice, you give of your time, talent and treasure to be here representing the people of your districts.

North Dakotans for generations have emphasized education. With this bill you have an opportunity to provide financial support to ALL students educated in North Dakota regardless of school choice. I urge you to support HB1532.

In closing, I ask you all to consider the following, any redeeming qualities house Majority Leader Lefor has are a direct result of him being a graduate of the Trinity Catholic Schools.