

Testimony on HB 1532

Chairman Heinert and members of the committee:

Hello. My name is Heather Huighe and I am here to testify in support of House Bill 1532. I live in Minot, ND and am in Legislative District 5. I am currently a student at UND and am student teaching in the Minot Public School District, however, I would like to clarify that I am testifying outside of my roles as a student in a North Dakota public institution and as a student teacher in a North Dakota public institution.

With that said, I am passionate in my support for HB 1532 since it would help my family provide the virtue-based education that we desire for our children. HB 1532 would make the parental right to be an educational advocate for your child or children accessible. Currently North Dakota's private institutions are not an accessible education option for all of our families due to the lack of state support. Just because a private institution is inspired by a certain faith does not mean that its education is not appropriate for students of diverse backgrounds, cultures, or faiths. Our private schools play an important role in serving North Dakota students and families.

HB 1532 would not only help to reinforce our parental choices for our children but it would also help to alleviate the financial burden that choice bears on our families. My husband and I are parents of 5 children. Two currently attend Bishop Ryan Catholic School in Minot, ND and are in the 7th and 9th grades. Two attend Perkett Elementary School which is part of the Minot Public School District and are in the 2nd and 4th grades. The youngest is still in daycare.

As a taxpayer, I would welcome having a portion of the taxes my husband and I pay support the education we have chosen for all our children. My children have a constitutional right to an education. As parents, my husband and I have a constitutional right to choose the education we want our children to have. A private education should not be denied because of cost. My children should not be denied their right to an appropriate education because it is not funded by the public sector. Also, our family should not suffer financially just because we exercise our freedom to send our children to a school that is not funded through public taxpayer funds.

As a parent that wants an excellent and well-rounded education for her children, I see the benefits of both public and private institutions. Our public schools provide a standard focused secular education with special education benefits. My children that attend the Minot Public School, Perkett ES, are there because they both have an IEP and need extra help academically or for other health reasons. I chose to have them attend public school to have their special education needs met. However, next school year ('23-24) my second grader will be transferring to third grade at Bishop Ryan because he has met his IEP goals so I would like him to have the benefit of a faith based, liberal education.

Bill 1532 would help our family tremendously, and other families that are seeking an education that public school cannot provide. It would also allow us as parents to be more fully in control of what type of education we can choose for our children. I want all my children to have an education that goes farther than public education can, by integrating virtue and faith into the curriculum and daily school life. With that said, it is a financial hardship for our family to choose this option. Without school scholarships and two working parents this educational option would not be sustainable.

Overall, HB 1532 would not be taking resources from public education and would support parental freedom to choose what type of education children have a right to. It is important to have options, and this is what this bill will give the families of North Dakota.

If you have any further questions please contact me by phone, email, or mail.

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