

As a leader of my local association of educators, I can tell you that our members are regularly talking about what is happening at the state Capitol, and the potential effects that bills will have on their professional lives, their classrooms and, most importantly, their kids.

We are discussing bills like Rep. Cory's efforts to establish "educational reimbursement programs," also known as vouchers. Past legislative sessions have seen efforts like these under different names, like "education savings accounts," but the intent is always the same: divert public monies away from public schools and toward private schools.

Private schools and school choice already exist in North Dakota. Parents have the absolute right and ability to send their children to a private school or to home school them. But it should be up to them to pay the costs of sending students to a private, **and in some cases for-profit**, enterprise that **can** choose whether or not to admit them. Public schools do not have that same ability; any student whose family wishes for them to attend a public school must be enrolled. And for those students in our public schools, they deserve more resources that will help them to achieve their true potential, not less.

This is truly a concern for our rural schools and communities. We need to be cognizant of using those education dollars for the betterment of educating our public school students. We can give our rural students more learning opportunities if dollars are spent on public education