

My three children had different elementary school needs that we were able to meet in Grand Forks through public and non-public schools. I support HB 1532 because it will empower more parents to be a voice in their child's educational path and provide the best fit for each child.

Joseph had the most classic elementary school experience, walking one block to St. Michael's Catholic school with his dad each morning. The location was a bonus to the exceptional academics and focus on faith-filled opportunities and service. St. Michael's understood parents are the first teachers and partnered with them continuously through communication, opportunities for involvement, and service. With only one or two teachers for each grade, exceptional leadership, teacher retention, and small class sizes the children knew and had a relationship with all teachers and staff.

Elliott also attended St. Michael's Catholic school but navigated the pandemic for 4th and 5th grade. I served on the St. Michael's Board of Education as President during the pandemic. Our smaller school size allowed staff, students, and parents to navigate these uncertain times with more safety and agility than the larger school district. We were able to communicate more frequently and make custom decisions about the status of each classroom associated with masking and transitioning a classroom to virtual learning. We also were able to increase testing so we could stop masking with confidence and provide free testing for all school families sooner than other schools.

Katelyn, our youngest, is a nonverbal, quadriplegic, medically fragile 4th grader who loves attending Century Elementary at Grand Forks Public School. She goes to school with a nurse and has a paraprofessional, vision, speech, and special education teacher and an occupational and physical therapist. We are grateful for her education and applaud the public school for providing her with an exceptional Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

If the school choice option becomes available, public schools will find parents pulling their students out for non-public schools, and it's time that the public schools ask the question "why." The non-public school that my sons attended felt safe and well known to them. It was an extension of our home and matched the values we teach as parents. My sons do not need the additional support that Katelyn needs in the public school. They needed a place to build confidence, fortitude, and character. A place to learn about love, peace, gentleness, justice, to serve others, and to stand up for or help a friend in need. They now attend the public middle school and high school and are leaders participating in sports, arts, advanced classes, and student council.

I support HB 1532. I think that every parent in North Dakota should have the opportunity to choose the best fit for their child from a special need to a smaller class size. This system will encourage schools to strive for strong leadership, teacher retention, transparency and communication, and aligning values to the parents.

Sincerely,

Meredith Quinn