

Testimony on House Bill 1532
February 1, 2023, 2:30 P.M.
House Education Committee
Representative Pat D. Heinert, Chairman

Marya J. Skaare, President, Trinity Catholic Schools

Affirmative Support of HB 1532

Good afternoon, Chairman Heinert and House Education Committee Members.

My name is **Marya Skaare**, District 39. I am the current **President of Trinity Catholic Schools in Dickinson and more importantly, the mother of two school-age daughters**, so this bill is of great interest to me and is of great impact to not just my own children, but to the children entrusted to my schools by their parents. Thank you for the opportunity to be with you here today to speak in support of HB 1532. Just off of National School Choice Week—which has been formally proclaimed in ND for the last six years--and in the midst of the 47th Annual Catholic Schools Week, the timing of this hearing could not be more providential. Born, raised and educated in North Dakota, I am a product of our State's strong system of public schools from a small community where, like the majority of North Dakota, there was not a non-public school option available. Even today, only about 6% of school-age students in ND attend a non-public school. Even with the modest number of non-public options, my children have been fortunate enough to attend both public and non-public schools with the latter simply being the right fit for our family, and ultimately, where I would be called to serve in my career. I share this with you today because I simply want to take a moment to reinforce the fact that HB 1532 is not intended to be an indictment of public schools, just as it should not be used as an indictment of non-public schools. HB 1532 is not about pitting school systems against one another and it is not about a new funding mechanism for private school systems to the detriment of public school systems. In fact, upon reviewing the proposed Bill, I was pleased that it makes very clear that the intent is to expand our State's commitment to student success by implementing a reimbursement program for families who

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send their children to nonpublic schools. HB 1532 is clearly not about State support of school systems, it is about State support of STUDENTS--EVERY North Dakota school-age student regardless of the type of school with which they affiliate; and as a parent, that is incredibly encouraging and makes me so proud of who we are as North Dakotans. Our willingness to blaze trails, aspire to greatness and always prioritize our people, is exactly why this bill is worthy of a do pass recommendation.

Chairman Heinert and esteemed Representatives, please accept my enthusiastic and sincere encouragement for your support of HB 1532. Your support of 1532 is support of ND students and their success. Your support of 1532 is your support of unlocking funds for ND families to choose the educational path that is right for their children. Your support of 1532 is an investment in our future by investing in our people. Your support of 1532 is a difference-maker that begins today, with a do-pass.

Thank you, Chairman Heinert, I yield any time you will permit to questions.