



# North Dakota House of Representatives

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#18573



## **Representative Claire Cory**

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## **COMMITTEES:**

Judiciary  
Government and Veterans Affairs

Good afternoon Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

For the record, my name is Claire Cory. I represent District 42 in Grand Forks. I am here today to ask for support for House Bill 1532. House Bill 1532 seeks to improve the way education works in North Dakota by respecting the right of parents to choose the best educational setting for their child.

Currently, a parent is provided one of three options when educating their child; enroll their child in a public school, pay out of pocket for a private school, or to educate the child through a homeschool program.

House Bill 1532 recognizes that not all of these choices are created equal, in terms of their burden upon a family. As such, House Bill 1532 seeks to facilitate parents' individual decisions by alleviating a portion of the financial cost required by parents who choose to educate their child in a nonpublic school. This sacrifice infringes upon their right to choose the best environment for their child if the best choice is a nonpublic school. In these instances, the parent is forced to consider the financial burden, and this financial burden can be prohibitive.

In Grand Forks, private school tuition can reach \$7,000 a year, and for a family of four this could represent a \$14,000 expenditure, assuming 2 adults and 2 children. With our median family incomes in North Dakota, this would represent roughly 20% of their pretax income going to a nonpublic school. For an average family, this is an incredible financial burden requiring substantial sacrifice; for a poorer family, it becomes ultimately impossible to afford. As a result, the current system deprives families of making the choice of a nonpublic school

de facto, despite a de jure ability.

As many will testify before you today, and as many have via written testimony, this sacrifice is simply not possible and places an undue burden on the family. No family should be forced to choose between a school which does not fit their child's needs and paying the bills. This is the main reason why I and many of my colleagues introduced House Bill 1532.

**Mechanically, the bill works as follows:**

- When a parent enrolls their child in a nonpublic school, the school gives the parent a form requesting reimbursement for the cost of educating that parent's child
- If the parent completes the form requesting the reimbursement, the school furthers that request to the Superintendent of Public Instruction
- The Superintendent then issues a payment to the school for the cost of educating that parent's child
- The reimbursement payment must be at least 15% of and no more than 30% of the per-student payment rate
- The parent will see this as a credit on the invoice they receive from the nonpublic school for the cost of educating that child

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Education Committee, this concludes my testimony. I ask you for a DO PASS recommendation out of committee. I would prefer that the time remaining be spent allowing you to hear from parents and stakeholders, but I will stand for any questions.