

**House Education Committee**  
**Chairman Pat Heinert**  
**February 1, 2023**

**Testimony**  
**Shane Goettle**  
**Lobbyist of State Association of Nonpublic Schools**

**HB 1532**

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Shane Goettle and I am here as the registered lobbyist for the State Association of Nonpublic Schools.

This bill is about empowering parents and giving them the freedom to choose the educational environment they believe is best for their child.

I want to draw the committee's attention to a few things in the bill. First, on lines 18-19 you will see the definition of "qualified school." The definition limits "qualified schools" to schools inside the state of North Dakota, and does not include homes schools. I think that is important so that you know this program will apply only to qualified expenses a parent might incur at nonpublic schools that are accredited as such by the Superintendent of Public Instruction under NDCC § 15.1-02-11.

On page 2, lines 1-2, you can see the whole process proposed in this bill starts with a "parent" (defined in the bill) requesting a program form from a qualified school. Now, while a parent initiates this process with a particular nonpublic school of their choice, this bill is not designed as a traditional school choice voucher bill. The parents don't handle the funds, nor do they receive any kind of redeemable certificate.

Rather, the qualified school collects all of these requests, certifies enrollment at that school, and then requests program funds for the child's qualified educational expenses. In short, the dollars are handled between DPI and the qualified school.

There is a floor of 15% and a ceiling of 30% of the state's per-student payment rate, and this is, in the end, further limited as an offset against only the qualified education expenses the parent might otherwise have paid. In summary, once the qualified school receives the funds, the parent would see this a credit on the invoice the qualified school sends to the parents for that family.

You will note that HB 1532 has accountability, including the power to suspend a school from the program if there is any abuse. It also has protections for the schools that participate in that no other additional requirements may be imposed through rulemaking. Nor does a school need to alter its creeds, practices, admissions policies, or curriculum to participate as a qualified school.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I have with me today Gerald Vetter, the President of the State Association of Nonpublic School, who will follow me if you any questions for the qualified nonpublic schools. I will also gladly stand for any question myself that help this committee get to a "do pass" recommendation!