

Good Morning Chairman Sorvaag and Committee Members.

My name is Diane Jilek. I am a resident of District 128. I am here to support House Bill 1532 that would provide tuition reimbursement options for families that choose to send students to non-public schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony today.

I was a math teacher in a large public high school in the twin cities metro area for 13 years and also taught in a small rural public high school in Texas while my husband completed his doctorate. My husband currently teaches music at the University of North Dakota. He previously taught at various public and private schools in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. Education has always been a central part of our lives.

We have five children between the ages of 1 and 12. Three of our children attend St. Michael's School in Grand Forks. We believe the education and formation of our children is the most important job we have in this life.

Ensuring our kids grow into educated citizens and productive members of society who treat others with respect and kindness has and always will be our goal. St. Michael's has served as a true partner in achieving this objective, and we believe it is the best fit for our family.

Individual attention, differentiated instruction, and parental involvement are at the forefront of a St. Michael's education. The teachers know their students and use information from their performance in the classroom and on standardized tests to make data-driven decisions. Individualized tutoring, after school help, and enrichment opportunities are just some of the ways St. Michael's meets the needs of ALL students.

My kindergarten daughter recently went through an evaluation for special education services. Her teacher and principal have been reliable allies and advocates throughout this process. My 2nd grade son is reading at a level significantly higher than his grade level. He now meets with a specialist for reading

and math enrichment twice a week. We are thankful that St. Michael's has provided our children with these opportunities.

Being good stewards of our limited resources is a way of life at St. Michael's. On any given day, our principal can be seen greeting students at the door, subbing in a classroom, writing grants, performing lunch duty, and shoveling the side-walk all in addition to her "regular" administrative duties. The teachers go above and beyond on a daily basis, and the community of St. Michael's takes great pride in caring for and maintaining the school building, parts of which are over 100 years old.

The choice to send our kids to a non-public school does not come without its sacrifices. We do receive tuition assistance through the generosity of the parishioners of St. Michael's, but we still pay a significant amount in tuition each year. We live modestly and work extremely hard to make ends meet. In addition to his full-time faculty position at UND, my husband also serves as the artistic director of a community choir, drives charter buses on evenings and weekends, and helps a local farmer during planting and harvest season. When our third child turned one, we made the decision that I would no longer teach full-time so I could be home with our children. Since then, I have done childcare and secretarial work to bring in extra income and currently work 15-20 hours per week mostly from home.

We happily make these sacrifices because we believe so strongly in the quality education our children receive at St. Michael's, but this tuition reimbursement would certainly ease our burden especially as we watch the rapidly rising prices of gas and groceries eat away at our monthly budget. I hope this bill will give other parents the opportunity to choose the school that best meets the needs of their child.

On behalf of all the families of North Dakota that would benefit from school choice, I urge you to vote in favor of ND House Bill 1532.

Thank you for your time.