

## Testimony in Opposition to HB 1532

My name is Connie Hoffman, Fargo, ND, writing in opposition to HB 1532.

Language in this bill is vague regarding what constitutes a 'qualified school' or 'qualified education expenses'. Questions:

1. What restrictions would prevent this money from going to children's families with a primary residence outside of North Dakota, while attending a private school located in North Dakota?
2. Who will monitor if or how much a private school raises their tuition in response to this bill, increasing the threshold for 'qualified expenses'?

This bill, if approved, would lead to reduced funding of our public schools in ND at a time when our schools are in need of additional funding to address shortages of teachers and staff, including bus drivers and paraprofessionals.

HB 1532 clearly violates ND Constitution Article VIII, Section 5, stating that "no money raised for the support of the public schools of the state shall be appropriated to or used for the support of any sectarian school." Therefore this bill is unconstitutional and is only a vehicle to transfer \$24 million tax dollars illegally to private schools with no restrictions.

Public schools are required to follow the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Private schools are not. Private schools pick and choose their students, turning away lower income and children with learning, behavioral or physical disabilities to avoid the federal requirements associated with disabilities.

As a homeowner paying property taxes to fund my local public schools, if I have an issue with the school system, I can bring it to the local public school board elected locally. If enacted, HB 1532 reimbursement dollars would go to parents to fund private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers in this same way. As a reminder, churches are exempt from paying taxes.

If parents want to send their children to private schools, that is their choice to fund themselves. However, my choice is that my tax dollars DO NOT go to private schools.

The ND Constitution mandates that each child in ND be provided with a free public education. That is our priority as required by ND law. We must stand by our public schools or we will lose them.

Thank you.

Connie Hoffman

Fargo, ND