

March 10, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Alexie Adair. I am a resident of Lisbon, ND, an amazing rural community in southeast North Dakota. I am a mother of two beautiful daughters, one who attends the local public middle school. The other will be starting kindergarten at the public elementary school in two years. Additionally, I am a speech-language pathologist for the local public school district. I obviously have a vested interest in our community's public schools and any legislation that may affect them. I want to make it known that I am highly opposed to HB 1532 – Voucher Bill.

This bill, as presented, is detrimental to North Dakota's constitutionally provided public school system and will greatly affect most public schools' ability to provide a free and appropriate education to all North Dakota citizens. This bill would have immediate negative affects on funding, not to mention the possibility of damaging ramifications in the future. If this bill passes, private institutions will likely receive more funding than most rural schools and possibly some larger urban school. In my opinion, this is irresponsible and ethically abhorrent, for multiple reasons: (1) private schools have the option of accepting and rejecting students based on unclear standards, (2) private schools can function as for-profit institutions, (3) it has been documented that some private schools have practices of hiring staff without criminal background checks or appropriate educations, (4) private schools have no accountability or transparency requirements, and (5) there are currently no limits in place on tuition.

As someone who works under the umbrella of special education, I consider the fact that private schools have the option to reject students with special needs, emotional or behavioral concerns, and learning disabilities, (not to mention other traditionally lower performing subgroups) to be asinine. Why should these institutions receive public funds if they can turn away students whenever they please? They should not.

Additionally, as someone who lives in a small community with no private institutions within a 60-mile radius, I find it ridiculous that I should be asked to fund institutions that my children could never realistically attend. A more appropriate option would be to let the voters in the communities in which private institutions exist vote for limited mill levy authority to help fund private institutions.

I could write a short novel on why I feel this bill should garner no support from our representatives, but I will close my statement by asking you to do what is best for the 113,000 children who are served by public schools in North Dakota (as opposed to the 7700 who are served by private institutions). I still can't fathom why this is even being considered.

Respectfully,

Alexie Adair, M.S., CCC-SLP