

**Testimony, North Dakota Senate
Education Committee – HB 1532
Presented: March 13th, 2023 – 9:00 AM CST.
Presented by: Jacob Odermann**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee my name is Jacob Odermann. My wife AJ, our 4 children and myself are the 3rd and 4th generation to ranch on our family operation north of Belfield in Billings county. My children and I also represent the 2nd and 3rd generations that have attended Trinity High School in Dickinson.

The question at hand today to this committee is what value do parochial schools provide?

In a word – choice, and for families like mine, we not only cover our cost of tuition, but also the significant cost of transportation to and from school, most days this means over 100 miles of travel for family members. A choice we make willingly because of a number of reasons, but I will focus on two; Faith and In-Person Education during Covid.

Our family currently resides in a district with no high school and has chosen Trinity for 3 generations because of Trinity’s Mission - teaching the whole student “Mind, Body and Soul”.

Trinity and schools like it fill an important space for educational opportunities. High quality, accredited, faith-based education provides children the opportunity to learn math and science while also being able to learn about their faith on a day to day basis. Teaching morals and values which are essential in today’s society.

Titans see teachers and coaches do more with less everyday, individuals who believe in our mission, individuals who could have left for greener pastures.

Giving up earthly treasure for the minds, bodies and souls of their students. These individuals truly are models of Christ and give students an example of why giving of our time and talent is far more meaningful than any amount of financial wealth.

As representatives of your districts I thank you for modeling the same type of self-sacrifice, you give of your time, talent and treasure to be in Bismarck representing the people of your districts.

The need for school choice and how impactful it can be for children was highlighted during the Covid pandemic. Trinity students were in person learning from the fall of 2020 and beyond. While we had neighbors in our area whose children distance learned for part or the entire fall semester.

This allowed our children to receive the type of education which is essential for growth not only in reading and writing but also through the important social interactions an in-person education allows.

North Dakotans for generations have emphasized education, Covid emphasized the oversized need for families to be able to choose educational opportunities which our best for their children.

With this bill you have an opportunity to provide financial support to ALL students educated in North Dakota regardless of school choice. I urge you to support HB1532.