

SB 1532

## Testimony against SB 1532

I am against this bill for the following reasons:

- Private schools in this bill would be able to accept tax dollars without having to play by the same rules as public schools. No accountability, no transparency, nor requirements of a certain income threshold to get the voucher. They can still refuse whomever they wish...and yet receive public tax dollars. Because of this, there are no assurances that students from low-performing subgroups would have any opportunity to attend private schools, so the argument that this bill would help students in 'failing schools' is not true.
- This appropriation would only help urban families – there is no benefit to rural schools, but rural school students and schools will receive less support this biennium if this bill passes as it would divert educational dollars away from rural schools. The amount allocated \$24M for 7700 is the equivalent of a 1% per pupil increase – the same amount that public schools have barely been able to get to support 113,000 students for the past several legislative sessions. A parity increase to support our public school students would cost nearly \$340M and be a 14% increase in the per pupil payment.
- This would reduce the amount of money that could be invested in public schools. Understanding that education dollars all come out of the same bucket of dollars, this takes away over \$200 per student that could be invested into the overwhelming majority of students. Over 100,000 students attend ND public schools. About 7,700 attend private. Most of those families are more than fiscally able to manage their choice.
- Because there are no restrictions on who can receive funding, more than \$23 million of the proposed \$24 million would go to families who are already in private schools. Only 4% would actually be able to support students who are not currently in private schools, hardly an expansion of 'choice'. With no restrictions on tuition, this would likely result in the state beginning to fund private schools.
- If property tax payers are frustrated that they are paying taxes and they would like to have some of their taxes benefit them at their school of choice, then a more appropriate action would be tax relief in the form of expanded credits rather than a voucher.
- We are told this bill is about choice – so let the voters in the urban communities choose. Areas of the state that do not have private schools should not have to fund it. Instead we propose that in communities where private schools exist, they should be able to be allowed to go to a vote of that community for limited mill levy authority if their communities wish to help fund the private school. The state should not be allocating tax dollars without that vote of the people and their willingness to fund that school in their community.

Sincerely,  
Joy Marimon

