

Dear Chairman Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1532. As you may be aware, this bill seeks to establish a school choice program that would allow public funds to be used for private and parochial schools. While I understand the arguments in favor of school choice, I believe that this particular bill is deeply flawed and should not be enacted into law. Further, I believe that this bill would have a detrimental effect on our public schools, and would like to urge you to vote against it.

One of my main concerns with this bill is the lack of accountability that it provides. The program does not expand the regulatory authority of any government agency to impose additional regulations on a qualified school under the program. This means that there will be no accountability over the program, and private schools that receive public money will not be subject to the same regulations as public schools. This is unacceptable, and I believe that if private schools are going to receive public funding, they should be held to the same standards as public schools. If this bill is supported and becomes law, at minimum, a qualified school or private school should have to follow all the requirements of public schools. For example, they should not be able to turn away students, if a student with special needs is too costly or too disruptive, they shouldn't be able to kick that student back to the public school if they are receiving public funds. They should follow all state and federal requirements, open records, open meetings, required audits, etc.

Furthermore, I strongly believe that public schools are essential to our communities and to the future of our state. The national narrative paints a very dark picture of public education. However a Gallup poll was conducted in North Dakota, in 2016, showed that almost 90% of North Dakota parents rated their local school highly, I can't speak to what happens in other states, but we have excellent public schools in our state and we should prevent vouchers from reducing funding to public education.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote against House Bill 1532. We need to ensure that public education remains strong and that public funds are used to support it. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Dustin Hager  
Rugby, ND