

To the Senate Education Committee,

I am reaching out to you today as the Superintendent of Washburn Public School. I am asking you to DO NOT PASS HB1532. From a smaller district perspective, public dollars should be spent in public schools. It is inappropriate to give public funds to private schools without any accountability measures. Unlike public schools, private schools are allowed to turn away students they deem too difficult to serve, including students with disabilities. Our district has a variety of needs and challenges, yet we embrace all of them as essential and important learners within our building.

This bill as it stands could provide more than \$3000 per student to families who have chosen to not take advantage of the public school system that North Dakota constitutionally provides and who have instead gone to a private school. St. Mary's in Bismarck will get more money than 68 of our rural public schools do in their entire budget. A similar number exists in Fargo private schools. 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.

Voucher programs do not equally benefit all North Dakotans. Only students in large cities with private schools will benefit. Rural students will not benefit from the vouchers and rural taxpayers will be subsidizing students and families in other communities.

While I support a parent's right to choose an educational experience for their child, I do not believe public dollars should support schools that do not have to meet all of the same requirements as public schools. For these reasons, I respectfully ask you for a DO NOT PASS on HB1532.

Dr. Penny Veit-Hetletved, Superintendent

Washburn Public School District 4

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WASHBURN CARDINALS

SOUTHERN MCLEAN ROUGHRIDERS



"The mission of the Washburn School District is to provide a quality education addressing the academic, physical, social, and emotional well-being of each student."