

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Please vote Do Not Pass on HB 1532. Using public taxpayer funds—whether they're diverted from funds intended for public education or not—to support 'faith-based learning' is just one reason amongst many, many others parents like myself with the public good of our state and nation in mind oppose this bill. For instance, it's pretty clear that the private schools that would benefit from these public funds would be operating under different regulatory principles, from whom they could 'choose' to let in or not, to the sorts of support services students would need, to systems of pay and protection for teachers. Public education is a public good that has stood North Dakota extremely well. We all know multiple, multiple people in each of our communities who have dedicated and are dedicating their lives to public education in the spirit of what's best for democracy. Using the public funds of all to support the private choice of some for potentially religious-based motives is at its core anti-democratic, and on the surface and throughout suggests that a stated preference for a particular religion's worldview—and, really, any religious instruction—is deserving of receiving funding from all citizens of North Dakota. While some may assert that this Bill doesn't go primarily to faith-based schools, a quick review of the testimony submitted in approval of the Bill should put that claim to rest.

Since I've read most of the testimony submitted so far, I'm sure that those who would benefit financially from this misuse of public funds—the teachers, principals, and founders of, and the parents of students sent to, such school—are largely in favor of this bill. While I'm equally sure many of those who oppose are also likewise engaged in public schools, I would suggest that most without a particular dog in this hunt would view the public use of taxpayer funds for such a private cause as a pretty foundational reason for a Do Not Pass vote. As both a sometime private (Baptist; 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade) and public (American; the rest of the time) student in a state not so far away, and as a 22-year resident of this state and a parent of three kids in public school in North Dakota (12<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades), I can both attest to the quality of public education in this state and understand the desire of some to instill their children with private values. However, neither I nor my parents—even in our moments of most need—would ever have expected our neighbors and/or our fellow citizens to help pay for what was a private choice. We—as many, many others, including De Tocqueville way back in the 1830's—have always seen the unique value a public education holds for democracy in America. Please vote Do Not Pass on Bill 1532.

Lee Kruger