

Senator Conley and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Intention and implementation are two different things. I urge you to OPPOSE HB 1532. As a taxpayer who has no children, I am happy that a portion of my taxes go to fund public schools in my city and across the state; I appreciate contributing financially to the education and support of our young people, and I believe we all benefit from public education spaces where teachers “teach them all,” as one member of my community often says. This seems to be a reaction to parents and others who say tax money should go to non-public schools to offset the cost of education for parents who have chosen alternate options for their child’s education.

I have spoken with multiple members of my community about this bill- from public school teachers who tell me of the foster students who have safe space in their class to friends who send their child to private school because that is where they felt their child was better served. I’m a product of public schools, my mom taught and still teaches at a private school. I always say, she knows there are kids who thrive in the smaller classes and alternate environment and she knows she can lead kids in prayer. Parents have a choice, private school teachers have a choice, but I personally believe public dollars should not go to private schools.

The implementation of this bill is worrisome too, while supporters say there are safeguards and accountability, I am worried about the structure of having already limited-resourced administrators of public schools having to navigate this program, and further taking money that could go rather to making public schools better.

I appreciate the hard work of all teachers and respect the right for parents to choose where their child attends school. However, I do not think it is fair that a portion of my tax dollars will be allocated to non-public schools. This diverts much-needed funds from our public schools. Educators at public schools must follow standards and procedures from the state more comprehensively than those at a non-public school. Maybe it is a tricky balance and a hard decision to weigh “empowering” parents to choose non-public alternatives and respecting my right as a taxpayer to not have public funds got to religious spaces. Please consider both the opinions of the testimonies before you and also the consequences of this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Olivia Johnson  
District 12  
Jamestown, ND