From: Frank Schill
To: Randazzo, Addison - HTechClerk3 - HEDU - HNAT
Subject: HB1607
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Testimony House Bill 1607
February 5, 2025 – 8:30 AM
House Education Committee
By Dr. Frank Schill Superintendent of Edmore Public School

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Frank Schill, and I serve as the Superintendent of the Edmore Public School District. In addition to this role, I am a board member of the NDASA Legislative Focus Group and the North Dakota Small Organized Schools Organization. I am here today to voice my strong opposition to House Bill 1607, which proposes the implementation of an education empowerment account for K-12 students in North Dakota. This bill would allocate funds to families with children attending private schools.

This bill stands in clear violation of the North Dakota State Constitution:
• Article VIII, Section 5 states, “No money raised for the support of public schools shall be appropriated or used for the support of any sectarian school.”
• Article X, Section 18 states, “Neither the state nor any political subdivision thereof shall make any direct or indirect appropriation or payment from any public fund ... in aid of any sectarian school, or for any other sectarian purpose ...”

It is important to note that only 7,500 students in North Dakota attend private schools or are homeschooled, compared to the 115,000 students who are enrolled in our public schools. Redirecting public funds to such a small minority undermines the robust public education system that serves the vast majority of our children.

On a personal note, my parents chose to send me to private school through the 6th grade. At no point did they expect or consider using public funds to cover my private tuition. Similarly, I made the decision to send my son to a private school through 8th grade, fully understanding and accepting that it was not appropriate to rely on taxpayer dollars to subsidize his education.

If HB1607 becomes law, I am confident that it will prompt a constitutional challenge brought forth by the taxpayers of North Dakota. I am equally confident that such a measure would be overwhelmingly rejected by our citizens. Therefore, I urge you to save both time and resources by voting “NO” on HB1607.

North Dakota boasts an excellent public education system, deeply rooted in the principle of “Local Control.” Parents seeking changes within their schools should engage in the democratic process at the local level by attending school board meetings. If they feel their voices are not being heard, they have the power to rally their communities and elect school board members who better represent their concerns.

I believe HB1607 is a direct result of some parents choosing not to engage at the local level

of governance. Instead of valuing the role of the local school board and the institution of public education, they are attempting to bypass this process by appealing to the state.

For the integrity of our public education system and the democratic processes that support it, I strongly urge you to vote “NO” on HB1607.

If you have any questions, I am available at 701-520-9674.

Thank you for your dedication and service to our great state.

Dr. Frank Schill