

My name is Terri Niess. I have been a North Dakota resident for the last thirty years, have married a local North Dakota man, and we have chosen to raise our five children in North Dakota. This is our home.

As a teacher, I know education is of the utmost importance. We have chosen to have our children attend of a private Catholic school in our hometown. This was never a question to us, as Catholics who wanted our faith to be the focus of our entire foundation for our children's education. But that doesn't mean it hasn't been a sacrifice. The cost of the education in a private school, especially for all our children, is a challenge. This cost has had to be second to tithing in the importance of things that we have to save for each year, and will only rise as the cost of education continues to increase.

I was a public-school teacher for nine years before moving to teach at the private school where my children attend. In doing so, I lost over \$20,000 in income in addition to the benefits that the public school provided. I chose to do so because I knew that the environment of the private school was far more positive and would allow me to be able to be the healthiest, happiest, best teacher I could be for myself and my students. This school, the administration, and staff are truly a blessing for those that can attend her. This bill will provide the assistance that is necessary for others to be able to choose, whether they move schools or not.

A bill such as HB 1540 and SB 2400 would help my family, and many families in North Dakota, in a drastic way. These bills recognize that we, the parents, are the first educators of our children and the choice for where we educate is ours. This is incredibly important to us, so thank you. We appreciate that North Dakota allows us, as the parents, to choose the best education for our children to thrive in a school.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Terri Niess

Minot, ND