

Chairman Beard and members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to urge you to recommend a DO NOT PASS on House Bill 1540. I am a rural parent with children attending Grafton Public School District, and my husband is a teacher at Fordville-Lankin School in Walsh County, an extremely rural public school. Growing up, I had the unique experience of being homeschooled in grades K-5 and then attending Grafton Public School District from 6th grade onward. Having experienced both a form of "private" education and public school, I support parents' right to choose how they educate their children. However, passing this bill will have serious negative consequences.

Our public schools are the heart of our rural communities, and I see every day how vital they are to our children's future. Yet, they are already struggling with limited resources. We cannot afford to divert public funds away from them. Parents who choose to homeschool or send their children to private school have the right to do so, but using public taxpayer dollars to subsidize those choices does not benefit the majority of North Dakotans and will ultimately harm most of your constituents.

With 93% of North Dakota's students attending public schools, we must invest in them, not weaken them. Our children deserve strong, fully funded public schools that serve every community.

As a parent, I want my children to attend a fully funded public school that provides all the necessary services, especially for students with disabilities. Every child deserves access to quality education and support, no matter their needs or where they live. Public schools welcome all students, regardless of ability, background, or income. This bill would take critical funding away, primarily benefiting metro areas while leaving rural communities with fewer resources and no private school alternatives.

Please reject HB 1540 and stand with North Dakota's families.

Thank you,

Joelle Schmuck