

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 1540**

Senate Education Committee

Date of Hearing: March 17, 2025 2:30 p.m.

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This written testimony is presented in opposition to HB 1540, which would provide public funding for private school education through education savings accounts. All North Dakota students have the right to a free and appropriate education. The public school system is available to all students who live in the state. This right is available regardless of religion, race, disability, socioeconomic status, or zip code.

Private schools are not accessible to all students and are able to determine who does and does not attend. Private schools often do not provide services to students on IEPs or 504 plans and fail to make accommodations to ensure that any student can attend. If private schools received public funds, they should be required to have the same oversight and follow all of the same rules, laws, and regulations that the public schools do.

Families who send their children to private school have the means to do so and the North Dakota taxpayer should not be burdened with private school expenses. This bill shifts public funds to favor the rich over the poor.

This bill would take funding from rural areas and reallocate them to the more urban areas of North Dakota. This drains the resources of rural communities. Schools are the heart beat of every small community and a loss of school puts rural community at risk to losing residents, business, and families. Rural North Dakotans already suffer from grocery deserts, let's not create education deserts as well.

We should also be aware of the loss of funding from the Department of Education. If funding to the State or local school districts are ended, the public schools will need additional funding from the State. Any loss of funding from the federal government will have a significant impact on public schools that will need to be replaced by the State of the local school districts.

This bill weakens the public education system. Please invest money in public schools to ensure small class sizes, proper staffing at all levels, technology, and competitive wages for teachers.

Please oppose HB1540.

