

Good afternoon Chairman Heinert, Vice-Chair Schreiber-Beck and members of the committee,

My name is Danielle Wangler. My testimony is on behalf of myself as a parent and does not represent a position of any public school entity.

I write my testimony in **support of House Bill 1532**.

I am a proud single mom to a 13-year-old boy who attends Bishop Ryan Catholic School in Minot. I have been involved in education, in some form, for over 15 years. In high school, I taught Sunday school classes and was a part of a program that tutored peers and elementary students. Since then, I have attended college and obtained several degrees. I have been an educator in the Minot Public Schools system for 9 years. This year is my first year as an elementary school counselor. I am also an assistant cross country and track coach for Bishop Ryan Catholic Schools. I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of students, both in public and non-public school settings, from age ranges of 3 to 18 years old.

I grew up in a traditional catholic family and have always valued the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic faith. When I became a parent, I went through a spiritual journey that was powerful and, honestly, is the reason I was able to be successful in my education while being a single mom. That spiritual journey and the support I received from my family and faith, made an impact on my son. In second grade, he expressed an intense desire to learn more about his faith. When asked the common question of, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" his response was "a priest".

In order to provide the best I could for my son, I sought guidance from my family, particularly my grandpa, and priests and educators in our church. I found encouragement and support for things I could do at home that I practiced with fidelity. Even with that support, I knew it wasn't going to be enough for my son. I felt as a parent, I had to do more for my son's thirst for learning about his faith and explore what it means to be what he wanted to be when he grew up, a priest.

I quickly realized that the public school system could not accommodate his particular learning style and interests to reach the goal of being a priest. Throughout my years as an educator in addition to all of the professional development I've received, I have learned that each student has a unique learning style and external factors that contribute to their willingness and ability to learn in a classroom setting, eventually leading them to successes later in life.

Public school could not accommodate my son's need for learning about his faith, and his interests and need for faith-integrated education was controversial at best. As a parent, I could not shake the feeling of doing him a disservice by sending him to a public school that would tell him his beliefs and faith-filled questions could not be answered and were actually discouraged. I also knew as a single parent with no co-parent support, the financial aspects of providing him with the education he needed, was going to be substantial on a teacher's salary.

When my son was in fourth grade, I made the choice to send him to Bishop Ryan Catholic School because his need for knowledge of the Catholic faith continued to grow and his love of learning was being sacrificed in the public school setting. I continue to sacrifice and strive for a faith-based education because I know it is the only place that could best meet my son's individual need for learning not only for academics, but the faith, morals and virtues he desires to live by.

I believe in public schools. I believe in non-public schools. In the end, it is about the students and their individual needs, regardless of any financial situations. I believe that change is needed so that all students in North Dakota will have the opportunity to have an education that meets their individual needs. House Bill 1532 supports the current need for change so that all children have a right to an education that suits their needs and interests. My son and I would greatly appreciate your support for House Bill 1532.

Thank you,

Danielle Wangler