



March 28, 2023

Dear Legislators,

On behalf of American Experiment North Dakota, I am writing in support of H.B. 1532 and urge you to vote “yes” on this important piece of legislation for the state’s students and families.

When 56% of North Dakota students can’t read at grade level as measured by the state’s standard ELA assessment, and 61% aren’t proficient in math, it’s clear that too many students are not in a learning environment that best meets their needs. Yet access to alternatives is too often limited by financial barriers. Access to a quality education should not just be for the rich.

As an education reimbursement program, H.B. 1532 would relieve North Dakota families a small portion (up to 30%) of tuition-related expenses at a nonpublic school so that more students can access the same education opportunities. Empowering parents and families should not be controversial.

Despite significant increases in education funding — state revenue growth from 2002 to 2020 adjusted for inflation is up 142% — educational disparities persist across race and socioeconomic status. Abundant evidence shows private school choice programs improve the academic outcomes for both the students who participate and those who remain in the public schools.

For families who want to choose their neighborhood school, H.B. 1532 will not impact that decision or even impose changes to public education. This bill will also not lower public school funding. In fact, for families who participate in the education reimbursement program, local funding (through property taxes) will remain at the neighborhood public school even though the school is relieved of the costs of educating that family’s child(ren).

H.B. 1532 also does not violate the U.S. or North Dakota constitution. The Supreme Court and numerous state courts have held that similar private school choice programs are constitutional.

Education cannot be the great equalizer if financial barriers limit who can access better outcomes for their children. Please support H.B. 1532 and put North Dakota students first. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catrin Wigfall".

Catrin Wigfall
Education Policy Fellow
American Experiment North Dakota