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Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7

Dear Senator Elkin, Senator Beard, and the Education Committee,

My name is Susan Jahnke and I am principal at Grace Lutheran School in Fargo, North Dakota. Grace has been in the community since 1948, developing faith in thousands of students and educating them to a high academic standard.

I am writing today to urge support for HB1532's establishment of an educational reimbursement program to fund qualified student expenses at nonpublic schools.

Nonpublic education is on the rise around the nation, and Fargo is no exception. Since 2020, our school has experienced an almost 200% increase in enrollment. Our families choose us for a variety of reasons including faith-based learning that aligns with their personal beliefs, student-to-teacher ratios, our quality academic programming, and our close-knit school community. We also sometimes enroll students who struggle in public school due to its size, their peers, or who end up lost in the academic shuffle.

To exclude nonpublic schools from state funding implies that public education is the only legitimate choice for North Dakota's students and families. Even Fargo Public Schools espouses "choice" in their framework for open enrollment and "Choice Ready" high school learning paths. The message is: Choice is great, until you bring your faith into it. A family who chooses a school because it aligns with their faith is penalized under the current funding policies.

All families choosing nonpublic school in North Dakota pay for two children to attend school: their own and someone else's. They pay their share of taxes on top of tuition to the nonpublic school. Grace Lutheran School's cost per-pupil in 2022 was over \$3000 LESS than Fargo Public School's cost per-pupil, indicating nonpublic schools could possibly spend their reimbursement nearly 30% more efficiently for the exact same (and often better) academic outcome.

The State of North Dakota requires that all children attend school. At this time, many Christian families have no choice but public school. There is that word 'choice' again. A reimbursement program would allow more families to choose the option that is best for them: a Christian school, a place where their physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and academic needs are met in a way that aligns with their beliefs.

Grace Lutheran School is accredited by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and National Lutheran School Accreditation and has an excellent working relationship with Fargo Public Schools. We are grateful for Fargo Public Schools' status in our state and community. This bill would continue to build that relationship by bringing more students into the ministry at Grace Lutheran School while also alleviating some pressure on Fargo Public Schools.

Supported by the Red River Lutheran School Association
A ministry of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

Thank you for your service in the North Dakota Legislature. Please vote yes on HB 1532.

Sincerely,



Susan Jahnke, Principal
Grace Lutheran School
Fargo, North Dakota