

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to the committee in opposition to HB 1532. Nonpublic schools that will benefit from HB 1532 are not required to follow many federal and state requirements and the bill specifically prohibits requiring nonpublic schools to alter their admission policy. These schools do not have to accept or keep students that do not fit nicely into their code of conduct. I have witnessed this as a parent and as a teacher.

First, as a parent of a child that has mental health issues, I have been faced with the fact that my child did not fit into the expectations of the private school we had placed her in. This was a time when she needed smaller class sizes, teachers to care, more one-to-one attention to support her learning. Hoping to get that from a local private school, we took her out of public school and placed her in a place where we hoped to find help to support her.

Little did we know that within a few months we would find ourselves in a meeting being told that our daughter was not welcomed any more. They stated things like, didn't follow code of conduct, wasn't the right fit, there is a place she will fit better it just isn't here. In other words, your daughter doesn't fit our nice little box we place our students, therefore she is not welcome.

This was not an easy transition for a child that was already experiencing mental health challenges. Her mental health decreased rapidly, yet another place she experienced rejection. A place that stands on Godly principles, did not show God to our child.

As a public special education teacher, I have been a witness to many students that have been "kicked out" of the private schools, leaving parents desperate and frustrated. It is when they come to the public school that we offer hope. A promise that we take all students no matter their ability or disability, their behaviors good or bad, their education level, financial status, it doesn't matter. We take students where they are and teach them. We do not try to conform them to a box and when they don't fit, reject them but teach each child as an individual, accepting them for their uniqueness.

These monies should be spent on public schools where there is accountability for those funds and ALL students are able to gain access to an education no matter what. I ask that you vote no to HB 1532.

Sincerely,
Shawna Knipp
DEA President
Dickinson, ND