

Members of the Education Committee,

I am Father Christian Smith, a priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bismarck, and I currently serve as an Administrator of Trinity High School in Dickinson.

I ask that you please vote in favor of HB 1532. Every family makes a sacrifice to send their students to Trinity, and that sacrifice is very impactful for some. This bill would provide relief to a lot of struggling families and open the door to families who, for whatever economic reason, wouldn't otherwise be able to afford to have any choice among schools. As the Dean of Students and as someone who is very active in the community, one of the things that I hear most from people is that they would try to give their student an education that fits better fits them if they only had the wiggle room in their budget.

There is a common misconception that this bill is a cash grab for private schools. As I can see behind the curtain of the day-to-day of school administration, I can tell you first that schools would not benefit from this bill in any way except for increased enrollment. The benefit will go to families, and there will not be tuition increases because of it. Secondly, we work hard to meet all the requirements that the State requires for schools. In fact, much of my job is to ensure we are meeting the requirements put out by the Century Code and good folks at DPI and ESPB. We do this despite spending less per pupil than the State reimbursement rate while keeping tuition as low as possible.

Please vote in favor of HB 1532.

Thank you for all that you do for our State and our Country.

Fr. Christian Smith