



Governor Doug Burgum



April 21, 2023

The Honorable Dennis Johnson  
Speaker of the House  
North Dakota House of Representatives  
State Capitol  
Bismarck, ND

Re: House Bill 1532

Dear Speaker Johnson:

Pursuant to Article V, Section 9 of the North Dakota Constitution, I have vetoed House Bill 1532 and return it to the House.

House Bill 1532 appropriates \$10 million in state-collected tax dollars for the purpose of offsetting tuition costs for students attending nonpublic K-12 schools. These dollars would be paid directly to private schools.

Our administration supports school choice and believes that competition can improve outcomes in the K-12 education system, just as competition forces businesses to continually improve their goods and services in order to survive and thrive in a changing economy.

As North Dakota explores a path toward improved outcomes in our K-12 education system, we commend the sponsors and supporters of HB 1532 for championing change and school choice. North Dakota needs school choice for all parents, regardless of income or geography.

However, in its final amended form, this bill is not the comprehensive solution we need. It falls short of meaningfully enhancing school choice – especially in rural areas far from any existing nonpublic schools – and lacks incentives to expand nontraditional options in K-12 education. The bill also lacks public transparency and accountability standards for the actual use of the proposed tuition offset payments.

Also, this bill as written would not go into effect until July 1, 2024, just six months before the next legislative assembly convenes in regular session. By utilizing the upcoming interim to explore best practices through school choice, competition and innovation in education, we can create a more comprehensive policy that empowers parent choice, improves outcomes for students and provides a greater return on investment of taxpayer dollars. Other states such as Arizona and Iowa have made great strides in passing transformational legislation aimed at

producing better outcomes in education. Senate Bill 2284, still pending in the Legislature, would require such a study.

Finally, our objection to this bill is not related to its cost. The state spends 100 times more per year on public schools than is proposed in this bill for tuition offsets for students who attend nonpublic schools – and our K-12 public school system will receive record levels of state funding in the 2023-2025 biennium.

Simply put, HB 1532 does not go far enough to promote competition and expand choice in K-12 education. If not done correctly now, this bill could impede our ability to expand school choice in a meaningful way in the years ahead.

For the reasons stated above, House Bill 1532 is vetoed.

Sincerely,



Doug Burgum  
Governor