**TO:** Senate Subcommittee members as they consider Bill SSB 1065

As a school teacher and administrator in the Lutheran School system, I have had the privilege of working along-side many public-school systems over my 39 years as an educator, including the one in the city of Williamsburg, Iowa. My experience brought me to 4 different states including Iowa. I am proud to say, that many of the school districts believed that it was vital to educate the students in their district to the best of their abilities; no matter where parents chose to send their child(ren).. When the relationship was built on this premise, we accomplished many great things for families who wanted what was best for their child(ren). My experiences in working in Iowa have shown me that Iowa works for the providing support to families!

I have also witnessed through my experiences as a leader in accrediting schools the successful partnership between public school and non-public school when vouchers, ESA’s and other public support was allowed to take place. The fears of failure were replaced with partnership in educating all students together with the choice of where the students will go to school being given to the parent. It is my belief that parents ultimately should be able to choose the best education for the child(ren) and that they should have the right to be supported in their decisions. Many parents may not have that luxury because over the course of our educational history, educating children has become expensive.

I was very excited when Governor Reynolds highlighted Education Savings Accounts ESAs) in her condition of the state address. Her goal to ask Legislatures to work together to make sure every student receives a quality education regardless of income of where they live. My belief matched hers when she asked to ensure EVERY Iowa parent has a choice for a great public, private, or other educational option which meets their child’s unique needs.

When reading through the bill that you will begin considering this coming Monday, I would like to express my thoughts on some parts of the bill.

Division I creates “students first scholarships” which is estimated to be about half the per student dollar amount available to students who choose a charter school outlined in Division II of the bill.  As written, these scholarships are only available to a select number of students. I am **hopeful that the Iowa legislature considers replacing this division of the bill with an ESA program that serves Iowans statewide based on a parent’s choice** because we agree with the Governor that these programs should be offered “regardless of income, and no matter their zip code.”

Division IV creates a database that would require us to pay up to $7 per student to report to the database. As a principal in an Independently Accredited School through the National Lutheran School Accreditation process, I question the need for such a database. **I encourage the legislature to amend or remove this division.**

Division V expands the tuition and textbook tax credit. This tax credit has been in existence for many decades and benefits families utilizing public and private schools. I am grateful that the Governor has included this in her proposal.

Thank you so much for allowing me to express my thoughts. It is my hope that Iowans will continue to work together to make sure that parents are given the choice to provide the best educational experience for those children who have been placed in their care.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark J. Grewe