

December 17, 2020

Members of the Oregon State Legislature,

I am aware of an amendment being drafted to LC 21 to include private schools in liability protection and am asking you to pass this amendment. I would also ask you to include us in any financial relief being offered to schools to offset the costs of meeting OHA and ODE guidelines as set forth in the RSSL requirements.

Since June, Santiam Christian and other private schools in the state have been working tirelessly to implement the guidelines put forth by OHA and ODE. We have spent money out of our budgets to meet the safety regulations and limited our own enrollment to follow the space requirements. Our costs have risen but enrollment has been capped by physical space requirements for each student.

Yet, in the language for the special session on Monday there are two glaring absences.

One is that private schools are not listed as being protected under the limited liability proposal. If we are following the exact same guidelines as public schools why would we not have the same protections?

The second is that no additional funding is being allocated to private schools to cover additional costs caused by meeting state requirements related to cleaning and PPE. If we are being held to the same standards and being forced to pay the costs associated with those regulations, why would we not also receive funding to help offset these costs?

We believe that this has created an inconsistent and discriminatory situation where private schools are being treated differently than public. There are two possible remedies for this. If we are going to be required to meet the standards of the RSSL to open our schools, we should be funded and protected in a similar manner to public schools. If we are not going to be provided additional funds or not included in the limited liability, then we should not have to follow state guidelines. Thank you for your consideration of these issues during your special session.

Sincerely,



Lance Villers  
Superintendent  
Santiam Christian Schools