

Dear Chairman Dembrow,

I am writing to you to strongly oppose SB 223. I am a public school teacher who chooses to send my children to a private school. My children attend Salem Academy Christian School and there are many reasons beyond our faith that we chose to send them there. My oldest daughter graduated from Salem Academy Christian School at the top of her class and was able to attend Idaho State University Honors program - that would not have happened if she had stayed in her local public school. We switched my youngest daughter to Salem Academy when she was in eighth grade. She was in the top classes at her public school, only to be behind in some of the top classes and most regular classes at Salem Academy due to the low bar that is set in the public school. As a public school teacher, I have first hand experience with the continual lowering of standards in both behavior as well as academics where graduation rates are the most important thing and the well being and preparation for adult life is secondary. The systems that they have in place at the private school are exceptional and any interference from the Department of Education would jeopardize the fidelity of their school. They are able to provide an exceptional education free from much of the bureaucracy. The bill would open the door for the Department of Education to make unnecessary and damaging changes to faith-based education.

To limit the educational experience by holding extracurricular activities hostage is not only asinine, but cruel. Extra curricular activities enhance the personal and educational growth of our students. As we have seen during the Covid pandemic, sports, music and clubs are important for the mental health of our students. Why would you threaten to take that away?

I strongly urge you to vote no on this damaging bill and leave our private school system alone.

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