

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing today in opposition of SB 223. This bill is a threat to religious freedom, parental rights and choice. It appears retaliatory and would undermine the broad educational goals of private education. This bill would essentially turn private schools into de facto public schools. Parents of students attending private schools made such a choice in order to protect our children from the ever-increasing damaging effects of public education in the State of Oregon. Long story short, we do not want to be a part of the absolute failure that has become public education in this state and country. This bill is not reasonable and its overreach into all aspects of private school administration seems limitless.

This bill violates parents' first and fourteenth amendment rights as they relate to education. The first amendment grants parents the right to choose education for their children that does not interfere with their religious beliefs. The fourteenth amendment protects parents' rights to direct the education of their children and ensures the differences between public and private school cannot be eradicated.

The Senate Committee on Education has provided no justification for creating these requirements. The Committee's fall meeting focused on the shortcomings of public education, not private. There was no mention of private school issues or the need for more oversight. This bill effectively puts a state committee in charge of all Oregon private schools. Thus making ODE in charge of curriculum, schedule, facilities, policies and staffing. This creates another layer of bureaucracy and regulation that ultimately steals time, money and attention away from educating our children.

A schools exclusion from interscholastic activities (OSAA) reduces the interaction between communities and isolates groups unfairly. This bill is a threat to school choice and the diversity of educational options that currently exist in Oregon. That diversity of education speaks to the foundation for a productive citizenry in our state.

Finally, with the continued strain of senseless lockdowns and closures, Oregon's state budget is not in great shape. The Committee and all lawmakers should be primarily concerned with getting all children back in the classroom. Not a targeted attack on private schools.