

March 16, 2021

Dear Chairman Dembrow,

We strongly oppose SB 223. This bill poses a significant threat to religious freedom and parental choice. It also undermines private education in Oregon by making it subject to oversight by the state. It is infuriating to see the state educational system, a failed entity in many respects over the past year, try to knock out their competition.

My child's educational needs are best served by our private Christian school. We chose to enroll our children in faith-based, private education. That was our choice as parents. SB 223 would essentially force private schools to register with the state or cut off student access to choir, sports, and other interscholastic programs. Our schools already prioritize student safety, but this bill goes too far. It's unfair to punish our children by excluding them from enriching extracurricular activities that are currently offered to both public and private school students.

Our school is currently a member of OSAA, and our children have participated in wrestling and football. Why would you take this opportunity away from them, especially after the isolation created due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

SB 223 adds expenses to private schools and early childhood programs with little (if any) benefit to the schools or students served by them. The Legislature passed a law in 2019 to protect private school students, and SB 223 is unnecessary in light of that legislation.

We have one child left at Santiam Christian High School, a junior, and there's a reason that he does not attend public school. Faith is very important to our family, and we are looking for a different kind of education, one that emphasizes academic excellence, love and respect for others, and is not filled with political indoctrination.

We send our child to private school and we also pay Oregon taxes that pay for Oregon's public education system. Our child should have the same ability to participate in extracurricular activities as their public school peers.

Please don't use our students as leverage in political fights. I ask you to stand with parents, like us, and vote 'NO' on SB 223. It's unnecessary and will only harm our children.

Ken and Karen Marshall

Albany, OR