

Dear Chairman Dembrow,

I am writing to let you know that I strongly oppose SB 223. This bill is 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. Our school is currently a member of OSAA, and my own children have participated in soccer, football, cross country, and track and field. This Spring, our youngest son is finally being allowed to play an abbreviated football season. He is a senior. It is concerning that you would promote a bill that would take this opportunity away from my child, especially after the isolation created due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We witnessed first hand the effects these lockdown measures have had on teenagers and know personally that sports have been a saving grace for our son.

While couched in terms of "protecting children", 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.

I am an educator in an Oregon private school. We have worked tirelessly since the beginning of the pandemic lockdowns to educate and reach our students. We have worked to be in-person as much as the limitations of our state government would allow. I teach at a greatly reduced salary and sacrifice to have my own child in a private school. I do this by my own choice because I believe in the freedom to teach and have my child learn in a faith based setting. One of the great gifts of living in our beautiful free country is the freedom of religion. Please do not infringe upon this. I also pay Oregon taxes that pay for Oregon's public education system. My children 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 me, and vote 'NO' on SB 223. It's unnecessary and will only harm our children and our schools.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Villers