

Dear Chariman Dembrow,

I strongly oppose SB 223. This bill is a significant threat to religious freedom and parental choice. I ultimately undermines private education in Oregon by making it subject to oversight by the state. My child's educational needs are best served by our private Christian school, Santiam Christian. I chose to enroll my child in faith-based, private education, despite paying property taxes in two counties which support public schools we have not used for any of our three children. This was my choice as a parent. 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 is 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 my child participates in the baseball program. Why would you take this opportunity away from my child, 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 (SB 155) in 2019 to protect private school students, and SB 223 is unnecessary in light of that legislation. I have two graduates of Santiam Christian Schools and my youngest son attends currently. There is a reason we have chosen private Christian education over public school. Faith is especially important to me and my family and we are looking for a different kind of education. I should not matter what type of school our children attend. I send my child to private school and 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 do NOT use our students to leverage in political fights. I ask you to stand with parents like me, and vote 'NO' on SB 223. It is unnecessary and will only harm our children.

Nancy and Mark Ellis

Santiam Christian School Parents

Corvallis, Oregon