

To the Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

I oppose this bill.

Instead of creating safeguards and opportunities for students, SB223 will limit opportunities for and segregate students whose parents have chosen - for myriad and valid reasons - to send them to private schools.

Although registration in this proposed system is voluntary, there is no mystery in its compulsory intent. Schools who choose not to register - not to put themselves under the yet to be determined curriculum and faculty requirements - will be cut off from honor societies, sports programs, music and arts clubs, and many other extracurricular programs important not just for the students' current and future academic development but also for their emotional and social health.

There is no reason for this. Private schools have operated independent of state interference alongside public schools in Oregon for many years. I was a product of one of these private schools. I went on to college and law school, and I am now a parent beginning to make educational decisions for my own children.

Student development and opportunity should not be suppressed by the state legislature. The very opposite should be true. Any action the legislature takes should work to enlarge and protect the rights of students and parents to receive the best education and opportunities this state and country can offer. Instead, SB223 creates a system that punishes students when their parents choose private education over public.

In addition, as a taxpayer, I cannot imagine why the legislature would be committed to creating yet another layer of bureaucracy during a time when the state budget is apparently stretched thin and there are so many, many ways most Oregonians can imagine their tax dollars being more productively used.

I urge you - as a taxpayer, as a parent, as a former private school student - reject this misguided bill.

Respectfully,

Anna Harmon