

I am writing in strong opposition to SB223. I am a mother of two students and have chosen private school or home school for all of my children both over the past 18 years. The freedom to direct and choose my children's education is a fundamental right that I value and do not want to see taken away. It is also a fundamental part of the exercise of my freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Private schools are, by definition, private. They do not, nor should they, receive money from the state, and they should not need to submit to state oversight. Those of us choosing education alternatives just want to be left alone by the state government, and we have more than earned that right. This bill would attempt to fit all students into one mold and would remove choices for students to receive the best education that suits their individual needs. This bill also seeks to force a particular ideology and worldview on all students and is a real threat to diversity of thought and diversity of experience in our state.

Oregon public schools are failing academically, failing financially, and especially since COVID-19, failing socially. With that track record, why should the public school regulators feel fit to provide oversight to the private schools? This effort is a clear attempt to remove the competition that private education poses to the public education system; competition for students and thus for education dollars.

Oregon Public schools are failing academically. They rank between 35th and 40th in the country depending on which study you look at. By contrast, private schools have earned a reputation for excellence in education. They outperform public schools across the board. The public schools are focusing more on indoctrinating students with socialist and destructive ideologies in history, science, and even math, than they are on accurate education. The public schools are not fit academically to oversee private schools.

Oregon public schools are failing financially. Oregon citizens are continually being asked for more money for the public schools. Yet they want to take on the regulatory responsibility for the private schools in addition to all their existing roles? The state spends over \$10,000 per student per year. Private schools are much more affordable and provide more quality for the money. The public schools cannot handle the tasks they already have, why would we trust them with more?

Now, since COVID-19, our public schools are failing our students socially. Private schools were the first to begin to reopen to in-person instruction, and have done so successfully and safely. Public schools are depriving students of social interaction and extra-curricular activities. Why would we want the public system to also control the private schools?

Everything about the premise of SB223 is wrong for students, wrong for families, and wrong for the State of Oregon. The only people who would benefit from this effort are the power players in the public school system and those in the legislature seeking to force socialist indoctrination on all of the students by taking away the freedom to escape it.

Those of us that choose private education and support education freedom, do so at great personal and financial sacrifice. We pay our taxes, and pay for private school. We do so because we value our children and know what is best for them. We do not need or want the state government supplanting our parental rights, or infringing on our constitutional freedoms.

As a 16 year public school teacher veteran, I implore you to leave the private school sector alone and keep the focus solely on revamping and cleaning up education in the public school arena.

Please do not allow this takeover of education freedom to occur. Please reject SB223.

