

March 14, 2021

Dear Senators,

We are writing to you today to let you know how much we oppose SB 223 regarding private schools registering with the Oregon Department of Education.

Our family has experience with both public and private schools in Oregon. Our oldest child, now in third grade, attended our neighborhood public schools from Kindergarten through second grade. After those three years, we knew that, for a variety of reasons, there had to be a better fit for him. We have found that this year with a local private school.

In this current school year, our son has been in his classroom, all day, five days a week, something only like 6% of Oregon kids have been able to do (according to OHA). We could not be more thankful for his experience at private school this year and its courage to be nothing but supportive of in person learning. (For the record, there has been no issues with COVID whatsoever.)

We chose his school specifically, in part, because it aligned with our religious beliefs and we are very concerned at what that means for the school's curriculum if SB 223 passes. We are highly concerned that this bill would, among other things:

- Create an ODE advisory committee to oversee Oregon's private schools
- Private schools would be required to submit reports and information for approval by the committee in the following areas:
 - Curriculum
 - Student behavior & discipline policies
 - Instructional time
 - Student mental health & abuse investigation
 - Facility health and safety
 - Teacher competency & background checks

We do not want our son's school to be accountable in all these ways to the DOE. This is exactly why we pulled him from the public school system, so he could be in an environment that was not bound to the curriculum and agenda of the DOE. If SB 223 passes, there would be no difference between private and public schools and that is not acceptable. Oregon families and children deserve a choice on what they believe is best for their children.

We are wondering what the REAL reason is for introducing this bill, especially after a year where Oregon leaders have failed children in public schools. No one asked for this bill. No one has provided any reason for why the bill is coming up now. It would violate several constitutional rights. There is no benefit for it....except for more control and more power for the state of Oregon.

SB 223 does not benefit children in the state of Oregon, it is harmful to families who have sought out private school and as such, should not move forward.

Respectfully,
Jon and Laura Small
Tigard, OR