

While SB 223 appears to simply be a voluntary registration program for private schools, the option for public schools to refuse to engage with unregistered private schools in sports or other activities proves that the bill is designed to increase state control over private schooling, and make local public schools the arbiters of which students in our state can or cannot engage in OSAA and other student activities. If that clause were deleted, and private school's registration or non-registration had no bearing on their relationship with public schools, then the proposed measure could truly be seen as a matter of voluntary association. As it is written now, SB223 is coercive and reduces, rather than enhances, individual and community freedom to educate children in ways that are the best possible "fit" for each child and family.

Private schools are private for a number of very good reasons - they provide a helpful competitive edge in the education marketplace that helps all schools improve, they provide parental choice in the manner and design of their children's schooling, and they provide alternative options for parents whose children simply need a change in environment or perspective. As Private School Review notes, "the whole point of private education is that each school has its own distinctive personality. It also has its own take on the educational process." The roughly 60,000 students who attend Oregon's private schools are well served by these diverse approaches to education, and so are all the public school students in Oregon - diversity in educational options and educational approaches provides benefit to all.

There's no need for this legislation, except possibly to create a truly voluntary association between private schools and the Oregon Department of Education. If that's the intent, delete the clause which allows public schools to be the arbiters of which students in our state can have access to OSAA and other student activities. Keep access open to all, and keep private association with the Department of Education truly voluntary by opposing SB 223, or at least rewriting the legislation to remove all coercive elements from the bill.