

Dear Chairman Dembrow,

I strongly oppose SB 223. This bill is a significant threat to religious freedom and parental choice. It also 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. I chose to enroll my child in faith-based, private education. That 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's 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 many of my child's peers participate in activities. Why would you take this opportunity away from these children, 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 in 2019 to protect private school students, and SB 223 is unnecessary in light of that legislation. My child attends Santiam Christian School, and there's a reason that they don't attend public school. Faith is very important to my family, and we are looking for a different kind of education. It shouldn't matter what type of school our children attend. I send my child to private school, and I also pay Oregon taxes that pay for Oregon's public education system. My child should have the same ability to participate in extracurricular activities as her public school peers. Please don't use our students as leverage in political fights. I ask you to stand with parents, like me, and vote 'NO' on SB 223. It's unnecessary and will only harm our children.