

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.

Why would you take this opportunity away from my children, especially after the isolation created due to the COVID-19 pandemic? Now more than ever we need our children to have social interaction, both within school classrooms and the extracurricular activities sports provided through programs, such as OSAA.

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 children attend Holy Family Academy, 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; that is my right as a parent. Exclusion from interscholastic activities (OSAA) reduces the interaction between communities and creates walls, rather than bridges.

This bill is also a threat to school choice and the diversity of educational options that currently exist in Oregon. Diversity in education promotes human flourishing, pursuit of excellence and highest potential, and is the foundation for a productive citizenry in our state.

As a state, we also need to consider the financial impact this creates. This bill is wasteful and unnecessary and neither OSAA nor any private schools have requested this change.

his creates another layer of government bureaucracy and more regulations on private schools which will take money, time, and attention away from actually educating kids.

It shouldn't matter what type of school our children attend. I send my child to private school, and yet I also pay Oregon taxes that pay for Oregon's public education system. My children should have the same ability to participate in extracurricular activities as their public school peers.

Please DO NOT use our students as leverage in political fights; they have already suffered enough damage from such problems created from COVID and the problems that ensued in 2020.

I ask you to stand with parents, like me and vote 'NO' on SB 223. It's unnecessary and will only harm our children.

Sincerely,

Raeanne Barth
Marion County resident