

Third, SB 223 is concerningly vague regarding the curriculum requirements that will be imposed on private schools. Many parents choose private schools because they are dissatisfied with the curriculum at public schools. Either they think it does not adequately challenge their children or they find certain aspects of the required curriculum to be objectionable to their deeply held personal and religious beliefs. In my family's experience we found the public school curriculum to be lacking in core subjects necessary for our children's advancement, namely phonics, spelling, writing, critical thinking, science, and social studies. Class newsletters and reports from our first grader informed us that the bulk of instruction time was focused on social emotional learning and conflict resolution. While these are important skills to learn, they should not dominate instruction to the extent that math, reading, and writing are simply untaught. Furthermore, the overuse of technology in the primary grades became a tipping point for our family. As I volunteered in the classroom in a public school class in the Beaverton School District, I was sorely disappointed that the children spent the bulk of the day playing games on iPads instead of engaging with their peers and teacher. We decided to send our children to private school and have been pleased with the limited use of technology in the classroom and strong emphasis on subjects not at all covered in the public school. ODE should focus on improving public school education (and getting all children back in the classroom) rather than imposing undue burdens on private schools. Parents will leave private schools if they feel the curriculum is inadequate. The vague curriculum regulation proposed by SB 223 is unnecessary.

It is ironic that the Oregon legislature would attempt to interfere with private schools when the majority of public school students lack access to a full public education. To propose SB 223 now, of all times, shows a disregard for the critical needs of students. ODE, the Oregon legislature, and Governor Kate Brown should focus their limited time and monetary resources on getting students back in the classroom and fully caught up to grade level. If the state can achieve this, parents truly will have the choice to return to public school and perhaps feel comfortable with the experience their children are receiving.

In summary, SB 223 violates the precedent set forth by the United States Supreme Court both with regard to the due process rights granted to private schools and the right parents have to choose where their students attend school. SB 223 is overbroad in the range of students governed in that it includes children ages 3-6 years old and covers a wide range of programs that are not narrowly tailored to the exceptions in Section 1 (1). SB 223 interferes with the clear right of parents to find adequate educational opportunities to meet the needs of each child. And finally, SB 223 is concerningly vague in giving ODE unlimited power to dictate the curriculum at private schools and daycares. SB 223 should not become Oregon law.