

As a citizen of the USA and a resident of Oregon, I am opposed to requiring private schools to be registered with the Department of Education with the requirements and stipulations defined in this bill. The bill would require private schools to meet criteria set by the Department of Education that, while maybe less intrusive initially, could easily be augmented or altered to require such schools to violate the unique mission for which they were established. I am thinking primarily of schools that make religious statements of faith, doctrinal assertions, and other related matters central to their mission, but this does apply to private schools that, for any reason, have been established as an alternative to public schools. I also oppose this bill on the basis that any private school that does not register would be unable to benefit from voluntary organizations that provide interscholastic activities to public schools such as the National Honor Society and the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA). As I understand it, a recent court decision that may apply is from the case Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer in which the Supreme Court judged that if a state subsidizes private schools, it must also subsidize religious schools. If a religious school cannot register without violating its religious mission, because the state requirements of a registered school would violate that school's mission and religious principles, but then it also cannot benefit from programs provided for other private schools, then registration is in conflict with this case decision. Therefore, I believe the bill will also not hold up under scrutiny for constitutionality. I am a strongly devout Christian who is thankful for Christian private schools and who writes this testimony to protect these schools from government intrusion that could either reduce their ability to provide effective, broad, and liberal (in the classic sense) education for their students or undercut their ability to maintain their Christian distinctiveness.