

3/16/21

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.

As a former student in the Salem/Keizer Public School system and as a teacher with 18 years-experience teaching in Salem/Keizer Public Schools I know both the student and teacher side of public education. However, my children attend Crosshill Christian School, a private Christian school also in Salem. As you can see, I have a foot in each camp and multiple viewpoints as a student, teacher, and parent in private and public systems. For these reasons I see the sharp contrast between the public and private school systems, and I strongly oppose the state of Oregon governing what private schools can and cannot do.

**Honestly, I feel HB 223 is a last stich effort to dissuade frustrated families from leaving public schools to enroll in private.** This is all about money. I witnessed a similar maneuver last summer when small, private schools were ready to open safely within the metrics and safety standards only to be told that they couldn't unless they chose to get certified through the state as "childcare centers." Our Governor made this announcement in late July as private schools prepared to open in September. Crosshill Christian School chose to pursue licensing in order to stay open, but with that came numerous state-mandated changes, such as moving from traditional letter grades to a proficiency-based grading system like public. This change, among others, was appalling to me as I have watched proficiency-based grading in public mask the deficits in student learning for years. **Private schools should be allowed to hold students to their own, high standards and not have to water those down to match the woke, progressive narrative of public education.**

SB 223 is an overreach that will backfire. **Many conservative Oregonians are leaving the state as they have watched it go to ruin this past year.** If private schools cannot determine their own practices, curriculum, grading standards, or religious offerings they will look no different than public. Parents seeking options outside of public will have no choice but to homeschool or leave the state looking for better educational options elsewhere. Either way, they will not keep their children in public and this maneuver will not help to maintain public enrollment and student funding.

**My children are getting a far superior education at Crosshill Christian than the students receive in the public school where I teach.** It makes me sad to admit this, but I clearly see the disadvantages and inequity between public and private educational systems. In private school children learn US history beginning in 1<sup>st</sup> grade as well as science, cursive, spelling, art, and Spanish – NONE of which are still taught (or with any regularity) in public elementary schools in Salem/Keizer. My children know their math facts and can do complicated algorithms; public school no longer teaches math in this traditional way that leads to mastery. My children spend very little time on standardized testing whereas public school makes a priority of standardize testing at the cost of instruction time (or instruction that is limited to teaching to the test!) Class sizes are capped in private schools and public are overrun. Packing 36 students into a kindergarten class is insane and parents should have the right to choose otherwise!

While my heart as an educator in a Title 1 school is to connect with the most disadvantaged students and help them realize their potential, I'm keenly aware that what we offer them in public school is

simply not enough to get ahead and break the generational cycle of poverty. This last year has made me acutely aware of the growing disparity of opportunity in education between private and public schools considering how each entity handled educational offerings. **My children have had in-person, on campus instruction 5-days-a-week, full-time since September.** Students at my public school only returned this month to school for a measly 2 days a week for 5 hours a day. What a loss of learning for public school students! Private schools should be allowed to continue serving their smaller populations with methodology most suited to their needs without the restrictions created by failing public school systems. **I hope to never again see state overreach in the private domain as I have this past year and for that reason among the many others listed I ask you to stand with parents and teachers like me and vote "No" on SB 223.** It is unnecessary, will cause harm to our children and increase the mass exodus of Oregonians from our state who are done with our state government's corruption and overreach.

Sincerely,

Jenny Maguire

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