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Oregon Senate Education Committee

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE,
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chairman Dembrow,

I, Ashlie Haase, come before you both as a public school educator, as well as a parent of children who attend private school. I strongly oppose SB 223. I understand the motivation behind this bill has good intentions. SB 223 wants to ensure the safety and well-being of students. I assure you, that is already the goal of private schools as well. In 2019, Oregon created legislation in SB 155. That law was already passed to ensure students are safe. Therefore, SB 223 is unnecessary.

My children both attend Santiam Christian Schools in Adair Village. There is a very specific reason my children attend private school. Faith is very important to my husband and me, and we are looking for a different kind of education for our children that the public schools cannot provide due to the separation between church and state.

As parents, we chose to enroll our kids in faith-based, private education when our son was in first grade. He is now a Sophomore in high school. That was our choice as parents where we felt our kids could express their First Amendment rights of freedom of religion. Our children are thriving at Santiam Christian Schools, despite all the Covid restrictions that have been in place. Our children are allowed to get a good education, and continue to practice our religion freely.

Our children are heavily involved in extra curricular activities at their school. The school is able to teach and coach the activities our kids love (football, volleyball, wrestling, baseball, softball, theater, and more), while still linking it to our faith. SB 223 would essentially force private schools to register with the state or cut off their access to these programs my children love. This is unfair

to punish children by excluding them from enriching extracurricular activities that are currently being offered to both public and private schools.

Santiam Christian already prioritizes student safety, and they have safety plans in place as they have worked with local law enforcement to ensure that safety is a priority. Again, SB 155 was passed in 2019. Students are already safer due to that previously enacted legislation.

Please vote NO on SB 223. It is an unnecessary and unfair law. Please don't take our parental-choice away, as well as our First Amendment right of freedom of religion.

Sincerely,

Aaron and Ashlie Haase