

Dear Oregon State Legislature:

Regarding the proposed Senate Bill 223 requiring private schools to register with the Department of Education or risk losing the ability to participate in voluntary interscholastic and/or athletic competitions with public schools, we humbly request that the bill be completely dropped.

Families who choose to pay money over their tax dollars to send their children to private schools, religious or not, are doing so for personal reasons and have therefore demonstrated that they do not wish to be regulated by the Oregon Department of Education and their restrictions.

Our children attend private school. We have chosen to take on this financial sacrifice as it best aligns with our beliefs. The teachers and staff at our children's' school, and many others in the Portland metro area and the state, have been relentless in their pursuit of excellence, compassion, and faith even through previously unimaginable challenges in this past year. Requiring our schools to comply with ODE requirements, which may change over the years and for which we will have no recourse, is a violation of our right to a separation of the free exercise of religion and preventing interaction with public school children in sports and interscholastic events only harms all the children involved.

If we are to respect diversity and inclusion, we must allow individuals to live according to their own belief system so long as it does not harm others. We can encourage interaction with people who think differently than us, rather than force groups such as private schools to isolate themselves if they do not wish to be subject to the very regulations they are seeking to avoid by sending their children (at private expense) to private schools.

Please drop this bill completely, and allow private schools to maintain their autonomy, as well as interaction with the greater public community.

Sincerely,

Molly Reding