

Thank you for serving the citizens of Oregon. There are many issues facing us collectively, which if addressed with wisdom, grace, and truth, have the opportunity to strengthen our community and state for a much brighter future.

Of immediate concern to me is Senate Bill 223.

As an Oregon resident for over 40 years, I have personally benefited from the freedom of educational choice we have in this state. As a youth, I attended both public and private schools at different times, for different reasons, and the freedom to do so while also participating in competitive athletics and activities was a key part of my growth and development. As a student athlete, I received an education in accordance with my Christian faith and was able to participate in competitive athletics, which I did into college. I did not suffer under the threat of losing this opportunity as part of my family's educational choices.

As a tax-paying, voting citizen and parent of three school-aged children, I strongly oppose Senate Bill 223 and urge you to do the same. I have chosen to raise my kids in Oregon and appreciate the freedom to educate them in a private school according to our faith while also supporting their extra-curricular interests, such as participation in athletics and other activities.

Parents have a constitutional right to choose the education for their children that is consistent with their religious beliefs. Private schools are not requesting this change and their students and families would be harmed by it.

Senator Dembrow's concerns expressed at the Wednesday 3/17/2021 hearing relate to protecting children from sexual predators. I agree that this is important, but private schools already have extensive protocols in place to address this concern. In many cases, those protocols are more robust than public schools. In addition, there are laws already in place that provide a mechanism to penalize those who fail to protect students from sexual predators. Those laws, if faithfully executed, should serve as a deterrent for failure to screen and address complaints about employees of private (and public) schools.

In any case, SB 223 does not address this concern in any meaningful way. More importantly, it is a clear overreach in its attempt to govern private schools, and, as set out above, is unnecessary. It threatens school choice in Oregon, is wasteful of tax payer time and money, creates additional regulations on private schools that would unnecessarily divert resources away from students' education. It ultimately harms citizens' opportunities for growth and development.