

I am writing in response to the letter sent out by Senator Dembrow to allegedly correct misinterpretations of the bill. Senator Dembrow, if you truly understood, you would never have drafted such legislation. I am glad to hear your intent was not to infringe on the rights of parents and private schools, however, your intent is not what is codified into the law, rather it is the words. People after you with different intent may interpret or enforce them differently. That is what we must react to rather than your intent. If you are concerned about the safety of students, you would do much better to remove the new policies of allowing co-ed bathrooms and locker rooms. Those prove much more of a threat to students' physical and sexual safety. You could also increase safety officers at schools instead of removing them, and you could remove the policy of schools as gun-free zones, which make them targets instead of making them safe. The public schools have no ground to stand on to preach "safety" to the private schools. Period.

As you say, most schools already have such hiring checks in place. If there is concern about particular schools that do not have those in place, direct discussions with those schools would be in order, rather than new oversight across the board. There does not need to be oversight by the public schools of private schools, whether a little or a lot. Besides, there is no such thing as "a little oversight" from the government. History has shown that once a door is opened, it is always opened wider, never closed. It is flagrantly obvious that this bill is an attempt at incrementalism to get the oversight board established under the pretext of student safety. But we all know, if we are honest with ourselves and each other, it will not stop there, regardless of how innocent the supposed intentions are of those writing the bill. Even if such oversight were necessary, it would not be appropriate that it come from the public school sector. And if indeed, it were the "sole purpose" of the bill, then why are there so many other aspects included in the bill. I'm sorry. It just doesn't wash.

You say the bill only has to do with "items related to student safety, such as bullying, suicide prevention, prevention of abuse and sexual conduct by teachers." Each of the words listed here seem to have a common sense definition. However, as we have all seen, the language is commonly being manipulated to mean things that the words have never meant before. The words "bullying" and "abuse" are being equally stretched by the "woke" among us in conflict with traditional worldview, religion, ideology, and even science. This is obviously a setup for private schools to in fact be bullied by the public schools into changing their beliefs. Also, it is a low blow to use students' ability to participate in sports and extracurricular activities as a bargaining chip to achieve a political goal. The logic of saying schools are not technically "required" to register is fundamentally faulty. This is creating a lose/lose situation. Either a school chooses not to register and then looks as if they condone abuse, or they choose not to register and actually do condone abuse. Law-abiding schools will continue to be such, and law-violating schools will simply not register. Either way, nothing changes for the students. The only thing that changes is law-abiding schools have lost their independence. The needs laid out in your letter will not be effectively met by this legislation, nor any other legislation that would put state oversight over private schools. Additional government is not the best or desired solution to every problem. It should be a last resort. Please abandon this "long-term effort" and do not "keep working on it" in future sessions. Leave private schools alone and focus on your area of jurisdiction that has much need of improvement. There is no acceptable version of this bill. Thank you.