

Dear Senate Education Policy Committee Chair and Members,

My name is Emma Jopp, I am currently in my second semester of online PSEO classes at the University of Northwestern St. Paul, a Christian University. I am a straight-A student, work part-time, volunteer in my community, and am a passionate political activist. I am currently on track to complete my AA degree debt-free, at the same time I graduate high school.

As a student from rural Minnesota, my options for in-person classes are limited. The community college in Cambridge, as well as St Cloud Tech, are upwards of 40 minutes away from my home. Attending either campus multiple times a week would cost me a large amount of gas money and would limit my ability to work at my part-time job or be involved in my community.

Being able to attend online classes through UNWSP has been a wonderful opportunity. There is a reason that out of the approximately 2,000 Minnesota students who take PSEO classes through a faith-based college, around 1,400 of those students attend UNWSP. Their PSEO specific online classes have offered me a flexibility I would not have had otherwise, and the classes I have taken have been of a high quality I would not have had at another closer college. My professors are wise teachers who are excited to teach their subjects to their students.

SF1311 does not provide equal opportunity under the law. It discriminates against students of faith and decreases the opportunities that all rural students have to obtain a quality education.

I urge you to strike lines 19.8-19.11 of the original version of SF1311, which states, “an eligible institution must not require a faith statement during the application process or base any part of the admission decision on a student’s race, creed, ethnicity, disability, gender, or sexual orientation or religious beliefs or affiliations.”

Thank you for your consideration,

Emma Jopp