

To Whom It May Concern;

I'm writing to express my opposition to the amendment to SF 1311 and ask that it is stricken on lines 19.8 through 19.11 of the original version of SF-1311 which states: An eligible institution must not require a faith of statement during the application process or base any part of the admission decision on a student's gender or sexual orientation or religious beliefs or affiliations.

Additionally, I'd like my letter to become part of the Written Testimony for the upcoming hearing on Wednesday.

It is important for students to have the freedom to choose the post secondary institution that is the best fit and forcing students away from faith-based colleges will increase competition for PSEO spots at public universities, thus limiting choices available to *ALL* students.

Students are entering adulthood with much less college debt because of this program. Students state-wide have many choices about what institutions from which to get their PSEO credits, so no one is obligated to attend a faith-based college for PSEO.

Both of my aforementioned points have directly impacted me when I was a high school student. My oldest brother of five children attended a faith-based college in Minnesota his junior and senior year under the state's PSEO program. This college was the closest in proximity to our home and additionally he wanted to attend a smaller school. The financial burden was lessened for our family due to this PSEO opportunity. When it came time for me to apply for this program, there were few colleges participating compared to student demand. Despite being an honor roll student, involved in numerous extracurricular activities, I was not accepted into the PSEO program my junior year. My mom unexpectedly died in the spring of my junior year, so I did not reapply the following year in order to help at home with my younger siblings. I went on to attend college, but had to take out several thousands of dollars in student loans that burdened me for many years after graduating with my college degree.

Currently, my oldest child is looking forward to taking advantage of the PSEO program. She's only a freshman in high school, but is focused on maximizing learning opportunities. We are primarily a one-income household and my husband is a public employee so paying for higher education is something we do not have the ability to afford. Additionally, the closest college to where we reside is a faith-based college--one that she was anticipating taking classes. Online learning isn't a viable option due to past experience of distance-learning from COVID. If the PSEO opportunity is solely limited to public institutions, our daughter may not have the opportunity due to limited opportunity.

Minnesota high school students currently have many choices about what institutions from which to get their PSEO credits, so no one is obligated to attend a faith-based college for PSEO. Therefore I restate my opposition to the amendment to SF 1311 and strongly urge striking the language from the bill.

Thank you,

Sarah Esch