

To the Education Policy Committees:

I strongly oppose Governor Walz's education policy proposal to limit to the PSEO opportunities to students in Minnesota and ask that you please strike lines 19.8 through 19.11 in the original version of SF1311, which reads: 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.

Current law already only allows faith based institutes to receive funding for non-sectarian courses, therefore this bill does nothing except limit the number of PSEO options for Minnesota students. Many factors contribute to which PSEO program a student chooses, such as flexibility and educational options. Every program will offers a different experience, and the freedom to choose which institute fits their needs the best should be available to every student.

In a time when we are seeking to avoid exclusiveness, this bill is very exclusive: it eliminates freedom of choice. Students are not obligated to choose a faith-based college for PSEO. Currently about 25% of PSEO students attend PSEO at a faith-based institution. That choice should not be taken from them.

Forcing these students away from faith-based colleges will also be detrimental to all PSEO students, as it will create increased competition for PSEO spots at secular institutions. Fewer spots available means fewer students able to benefit from this incredible program.

My oldest child is only a year away from being able to participate in the PSEO program, and as a family we are very grateful the program exists. PSEO allows students to enter the workforce with much less college debt, sometimes even no debt at all. Looking at the college debt crisis across our country, it's not hard to understand why we cannot afford to decrease the number of our Minnesota institutions able to participate in the PSEO program and provide our students this valuable opportunity.

Again, I strongly urge you to strike lines 19.8 through 19.11 in the original version of SF1311. Thanks you.

Rachael Gallagher
13596 103rd Street SE
Becker, MN