

Committee on Education Policy,

I am writing today as a life-long learner, parent, and citizen of MN. My own higher education journey began my senior year of high school with a year of PSEO at Bethel College, an opportunity that I remain incredibly grateful to have been given. It afforded me the opportunity to reduce my future college debt at the same time as accessing courses that were not available in a high school setting. These courses were the first to pique my interest and helped start me on a career path toward becoming one of Minnesota's hard-working nurses.

I have been an active parent and community member in the public schools my children attend, advocating for the education of our students and the support of our teachers. I also hope to soon be an active member in one of Minnesota's wonderful private schools. It is an understatement to say that I am passionate about education. I am grateful for all of the education opportunities our state has to offer, both public and private, and I am incredibly discouraged to know that one of those opportunities may no longer be available to our future leaders.

I would like to state my opposition to the amendment of the original version of SF-1311 and that you would strike the language on lines 9:8 - 9:11 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 gender or sexual orientation or religious beliefs or affiliations.

I want to live in a state that gives families the freedom to choose the post-secondary institution that is the best fit for them. Twenty-five percent of PSEO students attend PSEO at faith-based institutions. These programs are providing necessary education for the growing number of students accessing the PSEO option. Forcing students away from faith-based colleges will increase competition for PSEO spots at secular universities and will limit the choices available to all students. It is also worth noting that students are entering adulthood with much less debt because of PSEO options. 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.

Also, I want to turn to the groundbreaking ruling in the state of Maine; Carson and Nelson v Makin, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Education, where the Supreme Court ruled that state education choice programs may not discriminate against religious schools. Minnesota has always been a forerunner for education, putting the child first and promoting best practice when it comes to education.

This is pro-child; a child should be able to choose where they want to be educated, whether it be a private institution or a public one without denial. This bill is discriminatory against youth who want a private, faith-based education.

These are many of the reasons I strongly oppose the amendment to SF-1311. I am proud to be a Minnesotan; we have always been ahead of the curve on the quality of education we offer our families. Let's keep it that way by striking the amendment to SF-1311.

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This is my written testimony and I'm asking for you to add this to the written record.