

Members of the Minnesota Senate Education Committee:

We are writing to ask that SF 1311 be amended to remove the new wording from lines 19.8-19.11 that state, "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. "

As a former PSEO student and now a parent I am concerned that such wording will cause decreased access for all of Minnesota's PSEO students. Faith based schools, which serve 25% of PSEO students will be forced to change their process or not be a part of the PSEO system thus resulting in fewer options for all students.

Personally, I attended University of Northwestern St. Paul for my PSEO classes over 15 years ago and it changed the trajectory of my education in a positive way. I was in need of flexible PSEO class options to go along with the classes I was still taking at my high school. Northwestern's online PSEO class options made that possible. PSEO also allowed me to graduate college in only three years, significantly reducing my college costs.

A faith statement also doesn't present a barrier to access but actually increases access by allowing students to be considered not just on their academics but as a whole person. Most schools already do this in one way or another as part of their essay application. It should also be noted that no one is forcing students to pick a PSEO school with a "statement of faith" requirement; there are many options to pick from thus allowing a greater number of students to access PSEO at a school of their choice.

Lastly, faith based institutions are already prohibited from receiving state funds for any sectarian classes, so this proposed restriction is unnecessary. The many PSEO options in Minnesota, both secular and faith based, are a vital and valuable part of our higher education system. There is no reason to set Minnesota students back in this way. Please remove this wording from the bill.

Brandon and Nora Whitney

3884 97th Lane NE, Blaine, MN 55014