

KOELZER

March 6, 2023

Dear Representatives, Senators, Committee Chairs/Members, Bill Authors

I am writing about OPPOSITION TO SF-1311 and HF-1269 because of the exclusive nature of the language around PSEO and the statement of faith.

Specifically, I am asking you to strike lines 19.8 through 19.11 in the original versions of HF-1269 and SF-1311.

I have heard one of things politicians saying this legislation is trying accomplish is offering opportunity to the BIPOC community, by eliminating the statement of faith requirement of Christian schools offering PSEO. Keep in mind, that "eliminating" anything never means more opportunity is opened for anyone.

So let me tell you a true story...

We have 2 very good BIPOC friends who have utilized the opportunity offered through the existing PSEO program to attend a faith based school. Without this offering, these kids **WOULD NOT HAVE ATTENDED COLLEGE**. They worked very hard to be able to attend the school and took full advantage of that opportunity taking an incredible number of credits each semester. They would not have felt comfortable in an environment that is not faith based. I know these are not the only BIPOC people who feel this way.

The fact that no public comment is allowed screams "We don't want to hear from you and we don't care about you." It is inarguable that this is the message that's being sent. Don't you profess to represent the people? Please, do enlighten me, about how you represent the people when you don't want to hear from the people? And limiting discussion/questions within the community is atrocious. Actions speak so loudly. Words are hallow.

Personally, my son is currently taking on campus PSEO classes at University of Northwestern St. Paul. He will graduate from high school in May with over 60 college credits. He has worked his tail off taking a full load of classes, earning additional credit via college level exams (DSST and CLEP), AND working 14 hours a week at a physically intensive job. All the while participating on 2 high school athletic teams and contributing to his community in a variety of ways. He is a super hard working kid. He and we **CANNOT AFFORD** college. My son, rightly, refuses to go into the debt to earn a degree. We helped him plan his path out when he was in 8th grade. Because of the current offering of PSEO and **ONLY** because of this, my son will be able to earn a 4 degree without debt.

My daughter was planning to start PSEO at UNW this fall. But if the changes to PSEO are made, she **WILL NOT** have the same opportunity as my son. She, too has been working her tail off in order to not have college debt. Again, she and we **CANNOT AFFORD** it. Her path was planned and worked on since 8th grade and she already had 9 college credits to her before her sophomore year.

By excluding schools because of their statement of faith, you are being more EXCLUSIVE vs INCLUSIVE. You are limiting and handcuffing a student's choice. And you are discriminating against these kids who are CHOOSING a faith based school.

Every kid is different. Some kids want a secular, non-faith-based school and do very well there. Other kids want a faith based school and do well there. My kids, along with 25% of other PSEO students WANT a faith based school. They would not feel comfortable attending a school that wasn't faith based. If that is ultimately what you're trying to accomplish - then this bill is perfect.

No one is forcing kids to attend a faith based school, there are plenty of offerings from schools that are not faith based. As such, no kid is being forced to sign on with a statement of faith - they get to choose whether or not to do this. Additionally, the law already only lets these schools receive funding for "non-sectarian" courses. So WHY are you doing this? WHAT do you hope to gain?

Thank you for your time. I hope you will seriously consider my words and the words of others you are hearing from. Finally, I want my letter to be attached to the bill as PUBLIC OPPOSITION - AND I want confirmation from you that you have received my letter and that it is being attached to the bill as PUBLIC OPPOSITION.

Sincerely,
Carrie Koelzer