

PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING LETTER IN THE WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE HEARING ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2023:

March 6, 2023

Dear Senators of Minnesota,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the amendment to SF 1311 regarding limiting Post Secondary Education Options (PSEO) for high school students.

Please strike the language on lines 19.8 through 19.11 of the original version of SF-1311, 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.”

It is important for every student to have equal opportunity and access to educational options. My oldest daughter graduated from Minnetonka High School in 2022, and also earned 24 college credits through the University of Northwestern St. Paul online PSEO program. Like many other high school students, the mental-health stressors of Covid-19 in 2020 affected her, and she found it necessary to alter the traditional path of schooling. She was unable to attend high school for a full semester during her junior year while she sought help for her mental and physical health. It appeared she would not be able to graduate on time after missing a full semester. This was when she enrolled in the online PSEO program at the University of Northwestern St. Paul. She excelled in the program and graduated with honors, summa cum laude with a 4.24 high school GPA and 24 college credits complete towards her bachelor’s degree. This was a huge accomplishment that helped her launch into adulthood with success and empowerment, especially after conquering her personal challenges. It was only made possible by the excellent PSEO program at the University of Northwestern St. Paul. Without the accessibility to this excellent online PSEO program at UNWSP, she likely would not have graduated on time with the rest of her class. Additionally, this program allowed her to stay actively involved in activities on campus (including the student newspaper as an editor, and the Minnetonka Symphony Orchestra) during her senior year at Minnetonka High School while also attending her PSEO classes online. This was so important for her mental health, and only made possible through the accessibility of the online PSEO program at UNWSP.

My daughter entered college in California in the fall of 2022 as a freshman and all 24 PSEO credits were accepted toward her bachelors degree. The PSEO credits she earned through the University of Northwestern St. Paul are affording her the opportunity to double major in bio-chemistry and music and hopefully achieve her dream of attending medical school someday. **High school students need continued access to PSEO programs at the University of Northwestern St. Paul and other faith-based institutions in order to be able to choose the educational option that is the best fit for their individual needs! Please do not limit these choices!**

Students need to have the freedom to choose the post secondary institution that is the best fit for them. With 25% of PSEO students receiving their education from faith-based institutions, these

programs are needed to provide access to PSEO for the growing number of students who seek this. Forcing students away from faith-based colleges will increase competition for PSEO classes at public universities and will limit the opportunity for the growing number of students seeking PSEO. In our experience, access to PSEO at the U of M was very limited and impossible to access already in 2020 when our daughter was seeking PSEO. We need MORE schools to offer PSEO, including faith-based schools, so that there is opportunity for EVERYONE to receive PSEO if they seek it.

Students are graduating from college with much less debt thanks to the many PSEO options in Minnesota. No students are being forced to enroll in a faith-based school for PSEO programs, so please do not limit this choice!

Faith and values were never addressed in our daughter's instruction for PSEO online classes through a faith-based institution. The classes she was approved to take through Minnetonka High School were general classes like Calculus I and II, World History and English, and none of them addressed faith issues. Please do not limit this PSEO option when it is not faith-based or biased instruction.

I am opposed to the amendment to SF 1311 regarding Post Secondary Education Options (PSEO) for high school students, and ask that you please do not limit choices for PSEO options from faith-based institutions!

Sincerely,
Karen Wagner
6945 Lake Harrison Circle
Chanhassen, MN 55317