

March 4, 2023

Members of the Minnesota Senate Education Committee:

We are writing to ask that SF 1311 be amended to strike 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.”

I am asking this for three reasons:

1. **This proposed change is unnecessary and could result in decreased access and choice for all of Minnesota’s PSEO students.** As faith based schools, which serve approximately 25% of PSEO students, will be forced to either change their process or opt out of the PSEO system, **there will be less options for all students.**
2. **“Faith statement” is ambiguous. A “faith statement”,** if defined as a general description of one’s personal beliefs about their faith, **does not present a barrier to access,** but instead **opens the possibility of further consideration** for students that may not fully meet the academic requirements. Giving the student the opportunity to write about/talk about their personal beliefs and expressions can strengthen their application.
3. **This type of question is already standard on most college applications. It just takes a different form** in a faith based environment. Most colleges already have a written/verbal portion to the application that may ask the student about their thoughts/contributions to their community, diversity, or any number of options to describe themselves and their identity as a whole person inside their community.

We have homeschooled in Minnesota for just over 20 years. We have participated in both secular (at the University of MN and various community colleges) and faith based PSEO programs (North Central, Concordia, and University of Northwestern) and have found both options highly valuable. **The faith based institutions are already prohibited from receiving state funds for any sectarian classes,** so this proposed restriction is entirely unnecessary.

The multiple PSEO options, both secular and faith based, are a valued and vital part of higher education for Minnesotans and they are working well. **There is no reason to limit this program and doing so would set Minnesota back. Please strike this wording from the bill.**

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