

To Finance Committee Chair Youakim and Members of the Committee,

Please attach this letter as Public Opposition to the bill HF-1269- Governor's Education Policy Bill regarding eliminating funding for PSEO programs that require a faith statement. I am asking the Committee to strike lines 19.8 through 19.11 in the original version and HF-1269.

I am urging the State of Minnesota to continue to fund all current PSEO programs regardless of their faith statement status.

My husband and I have six school age children. We live near a college that we have been planning to use for PSEO for our children starting this fall, as our oldest will be eligible. This college also happens to have a faith statement, but as the nearest on-campus opportunity for our children, it is ideal for taking PSEO courses. As college graduates ourselves, it is extremely important to us that our children have the same opportunity to earn a post secondary degree, and it is our hope they can do this with accruing as little debt as possible. I believe this is the hope of thousands of families across Minnesota. By eliminating funding to colleges that require a faith statement, over 2,000 students will be affected and lose out on this opportunity of earning college credits while still in high school.

Even though these schools require a faith statement, their academic programs are fully accredited and meet the same high standards as non-faith schools. Thousands of students graduate from these colleges and become successful, productive adults in society. The high school students enrolled in PSEO are motivated and eager, and as parents and teachers, it is our job to keep encouraging their desire for learning and pursuing higher education. This may mean choosing a PSEO program that is faith-based only because it is more accessible in geographic location. We all know after experiencing Covid shut downs, that in-person classes are highly beneficial for developing the whole student. High school students taking PSEO classes still benefit from in-person learning. If funding is taken away from the many colleges with a faith statement, the on-campus learning opportunities for those students who may not live near a public college will be removed. I want to see all qualified high school students take advantage of the Minnesota PSEO program, regardless of the colleges' faith statement status. It is also important to remember that the state of Minnesota only funds non-sectarian PSEO courses at any college.

As post secondary education becomes more and more unaffordable for families, it would only make sense to increase offerings for these responsible high school students, not eliminate programs. Minnesota is very unique in providing this program for its children, as there are only a handful of states that do. We are known to be very generous with funding education at all levels. Please keep funding all current PSEO programs so this opportunity will not be taken away from so many students.

Sincerely,
Marika Brown
Waconia, MN