

Dear Education Finance Committee Chair Youakim & Members of the Committee,

My daughter Emma is currently taking online PSEO classes full time at the University of Northwestern St. Paul (UNW). She is a Junior in high school, is a straight A student, works part-time, is involved with politics (one of her passions), and volunteers in our community. She is a hardworking and dedicated student.

Our family lives in a rural area, so having an online option through UNW has been an incredible opportunity. My daughter has been very happy with her classes and hopes to continue with their PSEO program again this fall. Her goal is to earn her AA degree and graduate high school at the same time. I have two younger children, and I do not yet know their future paths. I encourage my children to participate in PSEO in hopes of them graduating debt free. My husband and I attended both private and public schools and were burdened with thousands of dollars of debt. I do not want the same for my children.

Public colleges are right for some students, but they are not the best choice for every student. No student is forced to attend a faith-based school. Currently 25% of all PSEO students do, however, choose to attend a faith-based school. It is important to note that PSEO funding does NOT cover religious or faith-based courses. I am requesting that you strike the language which states an eligible institution must not require a faith-based statement during the application process or base any part of the admission on a student's race, creed, ethnicity, disability, gender, or sexual orientation or religious beliefs or affiliations.

Students currently have the choice to attend the school that best suits their needs. Discriminating against students who choose a faith-based school is unacceptable. In addition, forcing students away from faith-based colleges will increase competition for other PSEO spots at secular universities, and as a result, will limit available choices for all students.

I respectfully ask you to consider ALL students when making this decision. Thank you for your time. I hope you will seriously consider my words and the words of other families and students who are in opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Jopp

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