

March 20, 2023

Dear Education Finance Committee Chair Youakim and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to express our opposition to select additional language in bills HF 1269 and HF2291. Specifically, we oppose the new wording in the bills that say faith-based institutions are no longer PSEO options for students (HF 1269 lines 19.8-19.11, HF 2291 lines 18.13-18.16):

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.

This would impact more than 15 Minnesota colleges; PSEO attendance at those schools make up a large portion of PSEO participation today. **Per the 124D.09 Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act, funding is already limited to non-sectarian courses. The new requirement is unnecessary and takes away choice and freedom for Minnesota students. It will negatively impact Minnesota students, teachers, and valuable faith-based institutions that are respected in our communities.**

PSEO is a fantastic opportunity for Minnesota students; it allows students to earn credit toward college and potentially save tens of thousands of dollars. Student debt is a national crisis; The average undergraduate borrower has \$37,787 in student loan debt.¹ While college isn't necessary for success, we know that college graduates earn more than those with only a high school degree and a college degree helps increase your chances of financial success.²

Our children are only 9 and 7 but we plan to take advantage of this fantastic opportunity if our children desire. **We hope that our children will have the freedom of choice that exists now and that unnecessary limitations are not placed on their academic options.**

Thank you for considering our feedback; please ensure this letter becomes part of the written testimony in opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Joshua and Melissa Ives

¹ <https://www.bankrate.com/loans/student-loans/student-loan-debt-statistics/#:~:text=Key%20student%20loan%20debt%20statistics%201%2042.8%20million,federal%2C%20while%207.3%20percent%20is%20private.%20More%20items>

² <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/research-summaries/education-earnings.html#:~:text=Men%20with%20bachelor%27s%20degrees%20earn%20approximately%20%24900%2C000%20more,Women%20with%20graduate%20degrees%20earn%20%241.1%20million%20more.>