

SHELLY BOSHART DAVIS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 15



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Timothy G. Sekerak
Chief Clerk of the House
State Capitol Building, H271
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Vote Explanation on SB 197

June 9, 2021

Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I believe that Oregon students, whether they attend public or private schools, have the right to learn in an environment where they are safe. No student should be exposed to domestic violence or sexual harassment, especially at school. As a parent, this matter is personal for me. My children attend private, faith-based schools. I am continually impressed at the lengths to which the administrators and staff go to ensure my children achieve their academic potential in a safe learning environment. Simply put, private, faith-based education providers strengthen Oregon's education system.

After participating in the discussion and amendment process surrounding Senate Bill 197, I have voted "yes" on the bill. I have done so after making it clear during public hearings on this bill that the autonomy of private schools, particularly faith-based schools, must be preserved. Parents of faith should be free to have their children educated in an environment that aligns with their values, and without unwarranted government influence. Any attempt by the Legislature to subject private schools to standards or regulations that have a disparate impact or impose an undue burden on private schools would be discriminatory and violate the promise of the Constitution of the United States, which provides for the "free exercise" of the religious beliefs of each and every American.

Recognizing the autonomy of private schools, Senate Bill 197 has been amended to empower private schools with discretion in creating posters for display that provide students with resources in preventing or ending domestic violence in their own lives. I also want to clarify that under SB 197B, Section 2(2)(b), private, faith-based schools have the discretion to determine what constitutes age-appropriate education about teen dating violence and domestic violence. These schools must have the latitude to craft a policy that is culturally responsive to their values and that of the families they serve.

To summarize, I voted for Senate Bill 197 with the understanding that in no way, shape, or form, is it the intent of the bill to infringe on the rights of Oregon parents to have their children educated in an environment that aligns with their faith or to impose an undue burden on Oregon's private schools.

Sincerely,

Shelly Boshart Davis
Oregon House of Representatives | House District 15