

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 279**  
**Senate Judiciary Committee**

**February 22, 2019**

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Rachel Rustad, and I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 279.

I owe almost \$200,000 in student loans. My loans have been sold off so many times, that I had to investigate and figure out who was servicing my loans and it took me several years to figure it out. I finally went to a student loan debt counselor to help me and we consolidated my loans. She told me about public service loan forgiveness.

I tried to get my most recent employer (a nonprofit) to certify the loans but they refused even though my loans qualified. Then I got a new job at another nonprofit and they certified some of my loans for public service loan forgiveness. But I have like 35 different kinds of loans. It's so confusing that I had to make a spreadsheet to keep track of it all. I also have an Army student loan repayment program, and that application process is so confusing, it took me 2 years to figure that out. I have so many different types of loans and each loan qualifies for different programs or it doesn't. It's so confusing. So I found another student loan debt counselor and she has been helping me but without her, I would be totally lost.

I have 3 degrees: masters, bachelors, and associates, and I still don't have a decent paying job enough to even pay a fraction of my loans back within my lifetime. If it wasn't for income based repayment, I would be bankrupt because of my student loans. And my husband and I can't even file our taxes jointly and get the income tax breaks that we deserve because of my student debt. My debt to income ratio is astronomical, and the interest accumulates so fast that there is no way I can keep up. It's like an ocean of debt engulfing me. If there were more restrictions on this process, I never would have taken out these loans. I am highly educated and I can barely manage it. Without nonprofits that help the community with student loan debt counselors, the average person would be further victimized by this process. Student loans are out of control in this country, and we need help.

SB 279 will not get me out of paying off my debt. What it will do is make sure that loan servicers are held to a certain standard, and that they will be required to inform borrowers like me about all of our options for repayment. It will set up requirements and consequences for not following them, and it will establish a point person in the Oregon state government who can help borrowers who aren't treated fairly or lawfully. Passing this bill will help protect Oregonians like me from servicers who, instead of helping me, instead try to make sure they make the most money off of me.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 279.