

TO: CHAIR WAGNER AND THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Kinta M. Parker, Ph.D., Member of the American Association of University Women of Oregon

I write to you to express my support of Senate Bill 794.

A significant number of students attending our public colleges and community colleges today do so while also caring for dependent children. Unfortunately, Oregon doesn't track how many of our students find themselves in this situation. We can't determine whether student parents graduate at the same or different rates. We don't know whether student parents drop out at the same or different rates as students without children, take longer to obtain a degree or feel they must limit their career aspirations.

National data show that 53% of student parents will not complete a degree. Only 28% of single mothers graduate with a degree or certificate within 6 years of enrollment and another 55 percent leave school before earning any college credential at all. Low-income college students with children are 25% less likely to obtain a degree than low-income adults without children.

Collecting information about student parent status allows us to target supports to improve educational and social outcomes for these students at highest risk. This information could be essential in designing efficient programs that go on to improve the cost-effectiveness of education dollars.

The bottom line — a college education provides dignity to the student and a way up and out of economically fragile situations. However, the impact of a college education extends far beyond the student parent. Parents who complete or are obtaining a college degree serve as essential role models for their children, and their educational success reaches to the second and third generations. They also become income generating citizens of Oregon's economy.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 794.

Respectfully,

Kinta M. Parker, Ph.D.  
Sherwood, Oregon