

Oregon Student Association



Good day Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Thomsen, and members of the committee

My name is Berlyn Nicole Buncal from the Republic of Palau, Micronesia. I am a student at Western Oregon University, and I am here to ask for your support for SB 263.

I have lived in Oregon for almost 4 years due to school. I am majoring in Sustainability with a minor in Geographic Information Science. I am also the President of the International Club on campus. I have been a part of this club since my freshman year. I've met, spoken with and I am friends with multiple international students. As international students, we pay nonresident student fees. Students, like myself who are from the Pacific Islands, are considered international students.

Many wonder why we have to pay nonresident student fees, since our islands are a part of the United States. Just as every student, we all struggle. I know many students who work late hours to be able to pay for their tuition. As for myself, I work 7 jobs on campus just to support myself. I work day, night and weekends and I am a full-time student too. Many of my employers, supervisors, professors and friends know how much I work and study.

I came to America to get a better education and support my dad in the future. I take care of all of my financial needs, bills and I live independently. It's tough to worry about how much I need to pay for my tuition especially when I see it rising. In addition, many in-state students tell me how expensive they pay but I wish I paid a similar amount as them because I usually pay more due to the nonresident fee. Every term, I am required to pay around \$7,000-\$8,000, which is around \$21,000-\$24,000 a year. I am required to pay this much out of pocket. Fortunately, I have one scholarship. However, even if I want to apply for other scholarships, very few apply to international students, especially for us at Western Oregon University.

I beg the Committee to please vote yes to support SB 263. This bill will be of great help to me and other Pacific Islander students in furthering our education. I would not need to stress about how I will be able to continue paying for my education. In addition, this will open doors to more international students to be more motivated to reach out towards higher education here in the United States because we have the possibilities and opportunities to have our education enhanced. It is critical that the Legislature act now to pass SB 263. Please vote yes on SB 263 because this involves many lives, including mine, on having a better future.

Thank you very much for taking time to read my letter. No specific words can express how privileged I am to have my story and words be brought to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Berlyn Nicole A. Buncal", is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

Berlyn Nicole A. Buncal

OREGON STUDENT ASSOCIATION

For more information contact Perla Alvarez, Legislative Director perla@orstudents.org or 503-358-2927
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