

Oregon Student Association



May 6th, 2019

To: House Committee on Education

RE: SB 859, Tuition Equity for Graduate Students

Dear members of the committee,

I am writing to you today as an Oregon public educator of English Language Development. I have taught in elementary, middle, and high schools around the state of Oregon. This has afforded me a unique perspective regarding the impacts of the inequitable access to post-secondary education funding for students who are undocumented.

At the secondary level, this inequity affects students' actual access to needed funding in order to attend public universities and community colleges. It affects their mental and emotional health as they consider their individual options after high school. It influences their ability to be successful in school as they have to take on the additional stress of seeking funding that is often non-existent. Most importantly, it shapes their understanding of their personal value to our community. Students who are already navigating an overwhelming number of hurdles are having to be further burdened with the lived stress of being unable to access post-secondary schooling. This lack of access impact's these students, their families, as well as the state of Oregon as a whole as these folks are, in some cases, unable to reach their full potential as a result.

At the primary level, this inequitable access impacts students through more subtle means. The lack of access to funding and schooling manifest in the means by which students vocalize their dreams for the future. Some of these impacts are explicitly noted by students and some can be gleaned from the ways in which students will temper their goals for their future with their awareness of their family's limited access to resources. They might express an interest in a particular career path and simultaneously question their ability to aspire to this profession. Some youth don't even entertain the idea of becoming doctors, astronauts, presidents as they do not feel as though these professions are accessible to them. This is a result of a variety of factors including a lack of representation but it is exacerbated by the fact that they are quite literally unable to access the resources to attain the education required based on their inequitable access to these systems as a result of their undocumented status.

I urge you all to consider the grave nature of the decisions you are being asked to make with regard to this bill. I am tired of looking into the faces of my students with the full knowledge that our institutions, systems, and structures are not made for them, they are not inclusive of them, and often they are against their existence within them altogether. Please make space for my students in our post-secondary schools by passing SB 958 and SB 859.

Respectfully,

Relée Davis

Fairfield Elementary, Bethel School District

OREGON STUDENT ASSOCIATION

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