

Hello Chair Alonso Leon and Task Force Members,

My name is Kassidy and I am a 3rd student at Western Oregon University studying Political Science. I am here to share my story as a student, and I urge you to listen and hear my story because I have not had the typical college experience.

I have been attending Western Oregon University for three years and I am graduating a year early due to my financial situation. I have experienced a very turbulent undergraduate experience as I no longer have communication with my biological family, and very suddenly had to begin supporting myself in every possible way. I was raised in an abusive and unstable household that has caused immense trauma both in my childhood and into my present life. My biological family also did not support me when I began dating a person of color, so I had to make the difficult decision to move on in my life, doing what was best for myself, and my future.

I use my experiences from trauma to work within systems in society and higher education to make systems, structures, and institutions better for people who have and continue to go through what I had to endure. I have experienced houselessness and have questioned how I will afford necessities. I have been fortunate to have support from my partner, her family, and friends who have stepped in as my chosen family. Though I use my past experiences to help others, it should not be up to students to help each other take care of their basic needs. Students have a lot on their plate with classes and obtaining their education. We need services, resources, and funding to support students' basic needs and mental health. This needs to be happening at the state level because we, students, need your support and your help.

I urge this task force to remember my story when developing legislation around higher education in Oregon. Please invest in students like me.

Thank you for your time.

Kassidy Fegles-Jones