

Hello Chair Alonso Leon, CoChairs Weber and Neron, and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Abby Smith and I am a student at Treasure Valley Community College. I am here to ask you to join students in supporting HB 2590, the Student Voice Bill.

Being a rural community college, Treasure Valley Community College sometimes lacks the funds and/or professors that other colleges may have because of location. Classes that would benefit the students and community are not present or are underfunded, and because of that students do not receive as much opportunity as I wish they did.

Voices of students like me are critical for the legislature in order to truly address the needs of students in higher education. I want to work with you to create a campus that does not require conformity but respects everyone's backgrounds. A perfect institution would also provide a personal experience with staff or advisors to make the student feel involved and important.

Besides COVID-19, some barriers that I have encountered during my education include finding classes that fit with what I want to major in, because of the rural community, I feel many times this college is the last to receive funds, or has to fight EXTRA hard for our representation.

As a first generation student I was also the first to apply for student loans in my family. Many in the Treasure Valley are first generation students and so as a community we struggle with this issue. Student loans are a challenge because of the new process, and the little help we receive. Not just me, but my fellow students in the Treasure Valley, would be helped by increased access to higher education, because of our disadvantage geographically. As a student representing TVCC on the OCCSA board, I have experienced the West side of the state, and how differently it runs than ours. Our processes are different, our lifestyles are different, and ultimately, our colleges are different. Why is this? Why should someone on the west coast have more opportunities in their college than me? There is no logical explanation, and that being so, it must change.

There are many students with many different needs being met. This bill can help change that by creating a special committee to tour our campuses and look at what is working, and what is not working. This process would create an opportunity for students like me to be heard, that's why it is so important that you vote yes.

We really need to get college right in Oregon, because the future of our economy depends on it. The Oregon Employment Department projects that between 2019-2029, occupations that require higher levels of education for entry will grow fastest.

Please remember my story when you vote on this bill, and please join me in supporting HB 2590.

Thank you for your time,
Abby Smith