

**Written Testimony on Senate Bill 553**  
**February 8, 2021**

Dear Committee Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Alii and Hello! First, I would like to express my gratitude towards this opportunity to submit my testimony in support of SB553.

My name is Chealsey Daniel and I am from the Republic of Palau, a nation under the COFA treaty. This is my senior year at Eastern Oregon University studying Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing & Management, and a minor in Economics. I am a first-generation student from a low-income household which has made my academic journey at EOU dependent on scholarships, federal grants, or loans from my island depending on what I receive per year to pay for tuition, fees, room and board.

I will say that I am blessed to have been able to leave my island to pursue higher education, but I have often been put in the position to choose between having a home or paying tuition. Which begs the question of whether or not having the opportunity to better your education is worth the financial burden it places on you and your well-being. This is why I am writing this letter in support of SB-553 that would give students from my community who are in the same situation a fighting chance to succeed.

I came to EOU hoping to be involved in everything from academics to extracurricular activities that were guaranteed to enhance my college experience. What I did not expect was to work two jobs, overload credits to fulfill scholarship requirements, pay thousands of dollars more than expected and still not learn much in classes due to overexertion. This is the reality for a lot of students, albeit harder for students that are thrown into uncharted waters with nothing but hope for better lives and better futures.

Now more than ever, I am fighting to keep my life together and my education on track to ensure the sacrifices that my family and I have made the past three years are worth everything by the end of this year. I may not benefit from this bill, as I will graduate in a few months, but it is a chance for students coming after me to enjoy their collegiate experience from start to finish without making such difficult decisions at every step of the way. I am asking on behalf of those who could not make it to their last year, those who are still on their journey, and those who are coming up as first years that you pass this bill and give them a fighting chance. This is more than just a vote, it is an opportunity to become a pillar of support and a helping hand revered for all generations to come.

I would like to close by thanking you all for your time and this opportunity to be heard and again I truly enforce the significance of supporting this bill to help ensure that we are able to improve our future and livelihoods, for ourselves and our families.