

Chair Alonso Leon and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Christian Gaines. I am a staff member at Portland Community College in Portland, OR. I am writing to request your support for HB2835. Having a Benefits Navigator on my campus is important to me because every day I see first-hand how much our students need additional support. I process Emergency Grants, manage the PCC Sylvania food pantry, administer student-parent scholarships, and provide other forms of basic needs support for students. As a result of COVID, we have seen demand for these services skyrocket. Previously, we would receive roughly 200 Emergency Grant applications per year. We're halfway through Winter Term and have received over 1,100 this term alone. The fact of the matter is, our students need support. They need tangible, monetary support in addition to dedicated staff who are tasked solely with helping students navigate and attain the aid that they need. We know that hungry students don't perform well. We know that housing insecure students are more likely to drop out. We know that students escaping violent homes are unlikely to complete their degree. A benefits navigator won't make these problems go away, but they will help our most marginalized students find the help that is out there, the help that will keep them on track to complete their degree and making our community a better place.

Thank you for the consideration.
Christian Gaines
Beaverton, OR