

January 22, 2021

Re: Policy Update – Oregon Senate bill would enhance higher education data

Dear Oregon Representatives and Senators,

Ascend recognizes the imperative for students who are parents to obtain high-quality postsecondary credentials as a path forward toward economic stability and well-being for themselves and their families. Critical to student parent completion are financial and non-financial supports on and off-campus, but these supports can only be provided and targeted well if colleges and universities are aware of parents on their campus. **That is why we wanted to alert you to and share our strong support for Oregon Senate Bill 564, legislation that would require the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission to design questions that allow students to self-identify as parents on all demographic data forms and require public institutions of higher education to make that data readily available. Full text here:**

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Measures/Overview/SB564>.

As you well know, parents make up 22 percent of all undergraduate students. These 3.8 million students raise children and attend school while navigating numerous obstacles and maintain a higher average GPA than students who are not parents. Again, critical to student parent completion is a robust mix of supports, which only can be offered effectively if colleges and universities know just how many parents are on campus. As there is minimal fiscal impact attached to SB 564, its passage would be a low-cost mechanism for the state of Oregon to establish itself as a pioneer for student parent data sharing.


Oregon's state and institutional data systems should collect and report data on students' parent status, including breakdowns by gender, race/ethnicity, income, and other



variables, to understand and document the experiences of vulnerable student populations, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic. Student parents are facing heightened financial insecurity during the current economic downturn and an unprecedented spike in unemployment. As colleges, service providers, policymakers, and advocates prepare relief and recovery measures, the unique needs of postsecondary students with children must be considered to ensure they are supported now and in the future. Accurate data is integral for higher education leaders and policymakers to pinpoint areas of high need and inform design of interventions that support student parents' ability to reenroll and successfully obtain credentials.

For these reasons, we hope you will join us in supporting and tracking Oregon SB 564, as we all together continue advocating for the approximately four million students who are parents across the country and for prompting Oregon to lead the way for student parent data sharing.

Thank you,



Anne Mosle
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Executive Director, Ascend



