

Date: 2/10/21

Chair Alonso Leon and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rae Blackbird. I am a senior at Madison High School in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to request your support for HB2835.

Having a Benefits Navigator on college campuses is important to me because, as a young adult that will soon be stepping into the world of college and higher education, this issue pertains directly to myself and my peers. Growing up, I went through the Portland Public School system and ate the school lunch with my peers every day. For many of my friends, that was the only full meal they would eat on any given day. Food insecurity in my city is approximately 14.6 percent, and has doubtless been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Giving access to basic needs to college students would make a world of change for countless young people. College is thought of as a time scraping to make ends meet just to keep a dorm room or afford a meal. This doesn't have to be the case. In the interest of the future of our state, HB2835 would provide tools for students to navigate their education without the crippling stress of food insecurity. The passage of this bill could mean generations of college graduates more present in their education with lessened pressure to overwhelm themselves with work to survive. Providing state support to Oregon citizens will create a new class of students more ready to be of service in return.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Rae Blackbird,
Portland Oregon