

Chair Alonso Leon and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Andrea Norton. I am a student at Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario, Oregon. I am writing to request your support for HB2835.

Having a Benefits Navigator on my campus is important to me because it helps those of us in need of some extra support. Simply affording basic needs can be a challenge while you're trying to find a job. You don't have the income you require to afford your food, shelter, gas, electricity, clothes, and medicine. Being deprived of these needs can make a person unfit for the employment they seek. It's a harsh back-and-forth that keeps a lot of people in the same unfortunate position for a long time. Which in the long run creates a decline in mental health, as well, as people on campus and in our community struggle to find optimism in our situations. This improves significantly when we have access to the support that helps achieve these basic needs. I can say from personal experience that I've been constantly successful; thanks to the supporters I have. In the times I've been without school supplies, resources for childcare, transportation, food, and tutoring, the school program happily helped however they could. It's rewarding to feel like someone's confidently making an investment in me, and simply watching my back, so that I can give back to the community with the skills I'm acquiring through school. It motivates me to do my absolute best, and I can perform well in my classes and provide better to my family with fewer stresses on my mind. This is especially nice in these present times when COVID-19 has us all in quarantine. The changes in routine and the extra financial struggles do have an impact on studying. The employment changes and having our kids home all day means there will be new concerns: will there be enough food, will we afford the rent next month, will we have enough money to keep disinfecting against the virus? In the times my family's gotten aid for these struggles, we've always successfully bounced back. The supportive programs available for these issues truly help maintain a healthy flow of progress at home. It also creates a more wholesome feeling of community when we come together to help one another survive.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Sincerely,

Andrea Norton

Ontario, OR