

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

My name is Danielle Eversole and I am the parent of an 11 year old child. Parenting while in college can really be a challenge with lack of study time and options especially during the pandemic. As a parent student, I think there should be more support to help parents better themselves and be a role model for their children. The education journey can be a way out of poverty and a new generation of educated adults. I attend Portland State University and I am writing today in support of SB 564.

Currently, Oregon lacks comprehensive data to indicate the number of college students that are also parents. This lack of data creates a significant barrier to making appropriate determinations about the specific educational needs and outcomes of student parents.

Identifying this key demographic information will allow institutions to best determine the proper allocation of resources that seek to increase access to higher education for student parents and support them in the completion of their degrees.

This matters to me because my education has empowered my family and I to change the path of our future. I didn't want to be a welfare parent, but that is the path I was on. After realizing my family and I were worthy of so much more, I took that leap of faith and began my college education in 2015. My personal journey has been difficult, working full-time and going to school part-time and then as a BSW student full-time. There are days I struggle more than others, but I seem to pick myself up again. I have decided I will get to graduation no matter what. What concerns me is what about other parents struggling and unable to pick themselves up. There should be support for them. Taking the first step is the hardest part. If they commit then as a society we should help them become successful. Take out the barriers of food, rent, working, and child care. Parents should be given the same opportunity to change the future of their family.

It is also important to acknowledge that the Covid-19 pandemic has created even more difficulties for student parents who are now attempting to homeschool themselves and their children as they pursue college degrees.

All students deserve to have the programs they need in order to succeed academically and Senate Bill 564 is the first step towards making this possible.

I believe that requiring public post-secondary institutions to identify whether a student is a parent, acting as a parent, or a guardian is an essential and desperately needed tool in the fight to lower the educational barriers for parenting students and close the achievement gap.

This is why I urge you to support SB 564.

Let student parents be counted.

Let us be seen.

Let our stories resonate through this hearing room, because they deserve to be heard.

Thank you to Senator Gelser for championing this bill and to Chair Dembrow for sponsoring it.
Thank you to the committee for this opportunity to submit my testimony in support of SB 564,

Danielle Eversole BSW student at Portland State University