

Dear House Education Committee,

My name is Kathleen Rodriguez Perez and I am a junior at the University of Oregon majoring in Indigenous, Race and Ethnic Studies and English, as well as a student coordinator at the UO Women's Center and Policy Coordinator Intern at the Oregon Student Association.

Today, I am asking you to vote yes on HB 2835, Basic Needs Navigator Bill, which will address the housing and food insecurity among students. In 2020, 41% of Oregon students were food insecure which heavily impacts one's ability to focus on succeeding in school. The lack of accessibility to medical care, affordable housing, nutritious food and so on can deter students from being successful in class and even graduating on time.

As a foster youth, I have been able to gain access to resources and support from the Department of Human Services in order to maintain housing and food security. I know that without these resources, I would not have stable housing or food security as I do not have the privilege of having family help pay for my housing or food. I merely rely on myself, scholarships and aid to support my basic needs. Currently, I am not able to work because of all the extracurricular commitments I have in order to help me become successful in entering the graduate school of my choice. It is difficult trying to choose between my current needs now such as having food on my plate and having a safe housing situation between my success in the future. Because of my lack of familial support and aging out of the foster care system, I do not know how I am going to pay for my rent my senior year which has interfered with my concentration in my current courses. As a student in the foster care system, I have had difficulty navigating within the higher educational system as it has proven to not be accommodating for students with significant trauma or experiences such as mine.

My story is one of many and I hope you remember it when you are voting on HB 2835.

Thank you,

Kathleen Rodriguez Perez