

The Honorable Chairperson Michael Dembrow
Members of the Oregon Senate Education Committee
900 Court Street NE, Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Chairperson Dembrow, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Minnie Evans, and I am a lifelong resident of Oregon currently residing in Corvallis, Oregon with my two children and spouse. I am currently a student at Western Governors University pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Human Resource Management. Today, I write to you in support of SB 564.

In 2013 I was in the process of pursuing my degree when my husband and I learned that we were expecting a child. My husband was in his senior year of a Computer Science BS at Oregon State University, whereas I was a sophomore at Linn-Benton Community College. My education quickly fell to the backburner as we scrambled to prioritize the completion of my spouse's education, at the same time as juggling a challenging pregnancy. In 2014 our son was born two weeks before my husband's graduation.

It took until the summer of 2019 for me to return to college in order to continue my Bachelors Degree. In those six years, I attempted terms and individual classes unsuccessfully, frequently meeting with insurmountable barriers related to caring for my son, and his brother who joined us in 2017. While my community college did have childcare available, we had considerable financial restraints related to student loans and low wages from my husband's entry-level position. Additionally, both of my children have special needs, which complicated the resources our family needed in order for me to have access to higher education.

Currently, I attend a university that is entirely online and self-paced, which is the only reason that I have been able to continue my own education alongside homeschooling my six year old Kindergartener, and juggling an early education Preschool curriculum for my three year old. Myself, and other student parents in my cohort are struggling immensely in the current pandemic to balance the needs of our children, with the demands of our school commitments. This problem of balancing children and school, which was a serious barrier to education before the pandemic, has been exacerbated by the current public health crisis.

Oregonians like me, who are both students and parents, need resources and support that match our unique needs. We hope that in having our voices counted, the data will be persuasive to universities and legislators who see the value in assisting student parents in pursuing higher education. In raising up strong families that contribute back to their communities by finishing post-secondary educational goals and joining the skilled workforce, we hope to reduce poverty in our state and improve educational outlooks for future generations.

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.

Sincerely,

Minnie Evans

Senior Pursuing a BA of Human Resources Management at Western Governors University
Mother of 2 Sons, Ages 6 and 3
Resident of Corvallis, Oregon