

February 15, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting this written testimony in support of SB 564, “Requires Higher Education Coordinating Commission to design question or questions allowing each student to identify whether student is parent or person acting as parent or legal guardian that will be placed on one or more forms used on annual basis to collect demographic information by public post-secondary institutions of education.”

I have spent more than a decade of my career teaching, both as a tenured faculty and part-time faculty, at four different community colleges across Oregon. In addition, I spent three years as a consultant supporting a pilot project in Oregon that supported pregnant and parenting students at four different community colleges.

Students who are caregiving children experience additional time and financial constraints than students who are not caregiving children. Despite these challenges many student parents persevere, are resilient and thrive. Completing their academic goal provides two generational benefits to both the student parent and their children. If Oregon knew how many students were caregiving for young children and what their needs were, Oregon may be able to provide support systems tailored to this student population. However, without any data there is no way to know how many student parents attend Oregon’s post-secondary institutions of education. The absence of a system to collect data about student parents, results in Oregon having no way to identify the outcomes and/or needs of this population.

Based on national research compiled by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research approximately 22% of all college students, and 26% of community college students are student parents, and 70% of all parenting students are women. Student parents are also more likely to be from communities of color than students without children.<sup>1</sup>

COVID-19 has provided additional challenges for student parents due to school and child care closures. They have had to step out of school and work to care for their children and provide educational support for children attending school remotely. This pandemic has reiterated the need for this bill.

Thank you Senator Gelser and Dembrow for championing and sponsoring this bill.

Respectfully,

Beth Gebstadt, MPH  
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<sup>1</sup> Reichlin Cruse, L, Holtzman, T, Gault, B, Croom, D, Polk, P. Parents in College by the Numbers. April 2019. Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) and Aspen Institute. Retrieved at <https://iwpr.org/publications/parents-college-numbers/>