

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tabitha Pitzer and I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 564. I started advocating for SB 564 before it had this specific name. I started advocating for the idea of comprehensive data collection of parenting students back in 2015. For six years, I have been supporting my dear friend Michaela Martin fight for her ability to be seen by our public higher education institutions.

This lack of data creates a significant barrier to making appropriate determinations about the specific educational needs and outcomes of student parents. The issue is that when you are invisible in a system, so are your problems.

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.

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 them be seen.

Let their 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,

Respectfully,
Tabitha Pitzer