



To: Senate Committee on Education
From: Chris Baker, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
RE: Testimony in support of SB564
Date: March 1, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen, and members of the committee,

Hunger-Free Oregon strongly supports SB564 which would require that data on student parents, and/or legal guardians, attending public post-secondary institutions of education is collected and shared with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

Hunger-Free Oregon's values and work are centered in creating systemic changes to end hunger and poverty, including the redistribution of resources and power to communities who have been disproportionately affected by systems of violence. Our policy and advocacy work is rooted in a desire for shared liberation from systems of oppression, such as racism, classism, cissexism and other forms of violence, which will allow all to thrive.

Our work on college campuses began in 2018 when a group of students at the University of Oregon reached out to us asking for support to help elevate addressing essential need insecurities that they were experiencing while attending college. In response to those students, the Oregon Hunger Task Force held a large [listening session](#) on campus¹. Since then, the crisis of college student food and housing insecurities has become urgent and clear through our work building relationships with students, conducting research, and supporting benefits access. This crisis, exasperated by the pandemic, drives our urgency in advocating for solutions that will end student insecurities and make higher education accessible to all.

While there is [national data](#)² available that highlights the number of college students who are parenting, Oregon does not currently have any comprehensive data that tells us how many college students identify as parents or legal guardians (of dependent children or young children). The data we do have, from the [2019 Hope Labs Report](#)³ that is based on

¹ Killeen, A. (2018, May 22). Oregon Hunger Task Force Issue Brief: Hunger and Food Insecurity on College Campuses in Oregon. Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/587bc89edb29d69a1a2839f2/t/5b156f43f950b718021920a4/1528131397527/Issue+Brief_+Hunger+and+Food+Insecurity+on+College+Campuses+in+Oregon.pdf

² Goldrick-Rab, S., Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., & Williams, T. (2019, April). College and University Basic Needs Insecurity: A National #RealCollege Survey Report. Retrieved from https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_digital.pdf

³ Oregon Community Colleges #RealCollege Survey. (2020, April). Retrieved from https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019_OregonCC_Report_v2.pdf

surveys from 14 out of Oregon's 17 community colleges, [PSU's recent Housing Report](#)⁴, and Hunger-Free Oregon's [report on Food Insecurity Among Oregon's College Students](#)⁵. From this collection of data, we see that students who are parents have higher rates of food insecurity (50%) and housing insecurity (65%) than their peers without children (39% and 49% respectively). [National data](#)⁶ finds that student parents are disproportionately BIPOC, women and first generation college students.

It is important to note that the aforementioned data was collected pre-COVID. Pre-COVID, Oregon's general population food insecurity rate reflected that 1 in 10 Oregonians were struggling to put food on the table⁷. Currently, 1 in 4⁸ Oregonians are food insecure. Even before the pandemic, college student parent food insecurity rates were higher than that of the general population. Anti-hunger advocates suspect that because of COVID, college student parent food insecurity has drastically increased just as the general food insecurity rates have.

Hunger-Free Oregon is a coalition partner for [HB2835](#) which would provide pathways to opportunity for college students experiencing hunger and poverty by placing a Benefits Navigator on each public college and university, and [HB2590](#) which would create a Legislative Committee that would look at ways to ensure that BIPOC students in postsecondary education institutions are graduating successfully. We feel that SB 564 could help support the implementation of HB 2835 to estimate the numbers of different types of students in need of resources, especially because the resources needed and available to parenting students (and the eligibility rules that apply to them) are different than those afforded to non-parent students. Additionally, campus food and housing security initiatives cannot effectively serve student parents if they do not also serve their children. But unless we know how many Oregon college students are parents, there is no way to properly assess the needs of the Oregon student body--particularly in consideration of two-generation approaches to serving both students and their children.

⁴ Townley, G., Stewart, K., Greene, J., & Petteni, M. (2020, September). Housing and Food Insecurity at Portland State University. Retrieved from https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/sites/g/files/znlhnr1791/files/2020-09/PSU%20Housing%20%26%20Food%20Insecurity_Final%20Report.pdf

⁵ Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon, *College Student Food Insecurity in Oregon: Listening Circle and Survey Thematic Analysis*, 2020. https://oregonhunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/College-Student-Food-Insecurity-in-Oregon_-Listening-Circle-and-Survey-Thematic-Analysis-1.pdf

⁶ Goldrick-Rab, S., Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., & Williams, T. (2019, April). College and University Basic Needs Insecurity: A National #RealCollege Survey Report. Retrieved from https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_digital.pdf

⁷ Mark Edwards, *Oregon's Food Insecurity in the Time of COVID (2020)* https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregonhungerreportdecember_2020.pdf

⁸ Mark Edwards, *Oregon's Food Insecurity Rates by Demographic Groups (2017-2019)*, updated December 2020. https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_by_demographic_groups_2017-2019.pdf

The passage of all three of these bills would provide a clear pathway to supporting and investing in Oregon's college students, but without the passage of SB564, we are lacking in the data needed to provide equitable solutions for all students and their families.

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For more information about our Hunger-Free Campuses work:
<https://oregonhunger.org/hunger-free-campuses/>