

Hello Chair Representative Reynolds, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services.

For the record, my name is Eleazar Gamez, currently a fifth-year student attending Portland State University. I am also the Director of DreamPSU, a student organization focused to unite, empower, and provide a space and resources for undocumented, immigrant, DREAMer, and DACA-related communities. I also serve as the committee chair leading the establishment of the Dreamer Student Success Center at Portland State University. I also serve as the Undocumented/Dreamer recruitment specialist for the Exito Scholar Research program at Portland State University. Additionally, I also serve as the community liaison for SOAR Immigration Legal Services. I am here before you today to talk about HB 2957, *Dreamers Belong Act*.

I am a first-generation DACAmented college student, about to graduate with two majors; Child Youth and Family Studies, Social science. This past fall term, I paid over \$1,000 in tuition for my education as the cost of higher education continues to increase year after year. I currently spend over \$2,000 in monthly household expenses; Rent, utilities, transportation, food, and much more. As a full-time student enrolled in 16 credits, my different leadership roles in my community, and being a lead mentor for a scholarship program that supports first-generation Latinx low-income students, I also manage to work on campus, which provides me with about 20 hours a week of employment. And to be honest with you all, I still struggle to make ends meet with basic living expenses.

When the pandemic happened, I was let go from my primary employment, and the hours of my part-time job were cut significantly. I had to postpone household expenses to make my \$495 payment for my DACA renewal. I didn't have enough money to pay for professional help with my renewal application, so I did it myself without the proper knowledge and hoping for the best. No DACA recipient should have to decide between postponing a monthly expense like paying the light and phone bill to afford the USCIS application fee for their DACA renewal.

In 2021, I had the privilege of being the legislative policy intern for the Oregon Student Association. I had the great pleasure of working on House Bills 2590- student voice bill, 2835- Basic Needs Navigator bill, 2912 - textbook on time adoption, 2542 - Mandatory fee Transparency, 3012 - student fee autonomy, as well as a \$25m increase for the Oregon Opportunity Grant - all of which were successfully passed. Now I say this not to brag but to demonstrate that as a DACAmented constituent of this great state, I have and will continue to be a leader within my community, and also face financial hardships.

I've been a constituent of this beautiful and great state since 2008. I should have the support of my state legislatures with this matter. I, alongside over 9,000 DACA recipients in the state of Oregon, urge you all to vote in favor of HB 2957, the Dreamers Belong Act, because Dreamers require help from the state we call home.

Thank you for your time and consideration.