

February 24, 2023

House Committee on Higher Education

900 Court St. NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 2961

Committee Chair Ricki Ruiz, Michael Dembrow, Chris Gorsek, Janeen Sollam and Members:

Please continue support for House Bill 2961 (HB 2961), which seeks to appropriate \$5,000,000 to Higher Education Commission for allocation to expand the scope and community reach of college access and success programs at public universities and community colleges.

As a graduate student, I realize the importance of receiving educational support to achieve our academic goals. From my experience as an undergrad student, there was little support for people who wanted to continue their education, and on the contrary, the tuition fees increased by 9% at most universities. This bill is beneficial for families, youths, and parents who seek higher education after high school.

Furthermore, in the efforts to support this bill, I urge you to consider the appropriate allocation of funds to reach families and people who are first-generation university/college students. Our state has done a significant job with university accessibility to low-income people; however, it has not been clear at all, despite the financial help to students, the eligibility criteria, and this should be included in the community outreach.

As our leaders, it is our duty and responsibility that the appropriate information is shared with our community, as higher education for Oregonians should be free or at least accessible for all. The information shared at high schools, institutions, and agencies with people of color, regardless of their immigration status, is disproportional and does not create an equitable service or access to higher education. I hope that by passing this bill, proper control and supervision of culturally appropriate community outreach are also implemented.

An investment in access to higher education for people should continue with higher efforts on how this support is explicitly shared with people and families of color and minorities.

Thank you,

Renato Santa Cruz.