

Dear members of the Oregon Senate Education Committee,

I would first like to thank you for taking on SB 572, and taking the time to hear testimony by students and parents on behalf of the Portland State University CCS program.

My family and I are originally from Southern California. As our son Massoud, who is on the autism spectrum was nearing graduation from High School, he was very keen on having a college education. We began looking into programs at various colleges, and were shocked to realize, there are precious few resources for folks on the IDD spectrum, and virtually no good choices in the state of California.

In case you are not aware of what a typical college program looks like for a student with IDD, the majority by far (with the exception of a few private institutions on the East Coast), two year "workability programs, which basically teach the student how to hold a job in the service industry, and related tasks (money management, etc.). Not satisfied with that option, and looking for a four year integrated program that allows students with IDD to have a genuine college experience and education, we were thrilled to find the CCS program at PSU, which was in its first year as an entity. Massoud applied and was accepted. There was one problem, we were required to be residents of Oregon in order to attend (since it was at that point, a pilot program). Excited at the chance to provide a true college experience for our son, we sold our home of 22 years, left our hometown, and moved to Portland, of which none of us had ever been before. With fingers crossed, we relocated and Massoud began his college education.

I could take far more time than would be proper to explain to you in depth, what a remarkable program CCS is. But suffice to say, it enabled our son to grow in so many incredible ways, that quite frankly, would not have been possible elsewhere. From intellectual growth to a huge jump in self confidence in navigating the world at large, and finding new interests, while finding himself in pursuing his passions, none of it would have been as profound of an experience that it is, if it wasn't for the remarkable passion and dedicated hard work of the CCS staff. From the Director down the line to the academic, workability, and peer coaches and mentors that worked with every student independently and tirelessly advocated with campus wide faculty to create modified curriculums for each student, based on their particular needs.

You need only to sit with each student that has gone through the program to realize what a success it has been. Not only is PSU's CCS program the only one of its kind in the Pacific Northwest, it is the only one on the West Coast, and a model that should be expanded across the country. If you think about that, Portland having this excellent model in place, PSU could be a pioneer in setting an example and sharing their model of the CCS program with other institutions of higher education across the state of Oregon and beyond.

When we all speak of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, people on the IDD spectrum are often overlooked. Imagine your beautiful state of Oregon, with so many wonderful social programs already being in place, being a true leader of DEI in education. A badge of honor to be certain, and simply a beautifully human thing to do that serves to better society as a whole.

I hope that you all find it in your hearts to recognize what Oregon has here with the CCS program at PSU, and find it in your best interests and those of your constituents, to vote in favor of SB 572.

Thank you so very much for your time, we are most grateful.

Sincerely,

Kurt, Asya, and Massoud Beardsley