

**Testimony Submitted by
Chris Coughlin, Policy Director
Oregon Consumer Justice
To the House Committee on Higher Education**

April 18, 2023

Regarding: Support for SB 424

Chair Lively, Vice-Chair McIntire, Vice-Chair Ruiz, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Consumer Justice appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of SB 424.

Oregon Consumer Justice (OCJ) advances a justice movement to ensure Oregonians have the freedom to thrive and equitably share in our abundance of resources. For too long, flawed systems and economic policies that favor profits over people have stood in the way of this reality, with communities of color most often experiencing the greatest harm. Strengthened through responsive and reciprocal community relationships, OCJ organizes, advocates, and litigates to put people first. We envision an inclusive future where financial and business transactions can be relied upon as safe and where all Oregonians know and have recourse to exercise their consumer rights.

Students, particularly first-generation, BIPOC, and low-income college students, face challenges to achieving educational and career success because of systemic barriers. Addressing the issue of transcript holds when a student has a debt to the educational institution will move us towards a more equitable system.

SB 424 would protect students and graduates by prohibiting public and private colleges and universities from using the withholding of transcripts as a debt collection practice.

For individuals trying to continue their education, withholding a transcript can impact their ability to register for additional classes or transfer to another institution. It can also make it difficult or impossible to apply for scholarships or fellowships that would allow them to continue their studies with less debt. And for graduates, withholding transcripts can make it harder to get hired for a job that could allow them to pay off their existing debt.

We urge you to support SB 424.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to Oregon's communities.