

April 26, 2023

Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Hudson and Wright and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alyssa Walker Keller, and I am writing today in favor of SB 940.

The past few years have been tough on our students, and districts are already working to solve the credit deficiencies students are facing in the aftermath of Covid. This bill could create a tool that is significantly missing for so many students; a path to get credit for the classes and learning they did in another country. When a student arrives in the US, it is rare for them to get the full, if any, credit for classes they have taken, and many students quickly realize that to graduate, they will need to essentially start high school over.

In my previous job, I spent over ten years working for the Migrant Education program with families whose work in agriculture resulted in the family moving across state and sometimes nation lines as they followed seasons, crop cycles, and job availability. The students in this highly mobile population experience a great deal of disruption in their education, and one of the greatest challenges for high school migrant students is credit accrual. In my current position with IMIRJ (the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice) I work with those seeking asylum and other protections in the US-and when they're fleeing violence, persecution and other dangers for a future here in Oregon, they may not have had the time to finish their high school education, much less pack a transcript. Time and again, I have known migrant, refugee, and asylum seeking youths faced with the difficult realization that nothing they did before they arrived here at age 16 counted. It's enough to make a student start wondering about whether school is for them. Faced with a system that does not acknowledge material they already have learned creates apathy. Leaving school and finding a job becomes a much more appealing and practical option, and is impacting our graduation rates as a state.

SB 940 will give the Department of Education direction to study ways for our newest students to find success in their education and take classes they are ready for. This bill makes possible a path forward for students whose educations have been brought to a standstill or left to languish without sufficient evidence of their prior coursework, and helps us retain student interest and educational relevance. No one wants to take high school geometry twice!- and our students deserve to get credit for the work they've done, no matter where they did it. I urge you to support SB 940 and our students' ability to graduate in a timely fashion so they can help us dream of a thriving Oregon tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Walker Keller

