

## Written Testimony in Support of SB 979

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Miriam Cummins, and I am a single parent, a school board member for the Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, and a strong advocate for students with disabilities. I am here before you as a parent to voice my support for SB 979, which would require the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to convene a Students with Disabilities Success Workgroup. I believe that every student, regardless of ability, deserves equitable access to education.

As a mother of a child with a disability, I have firsthand experience with the challenges families face in ensuring their children receive the support they need in school. Accessibility is not a privilege—it is a right. Yet, students with disabilities often struggle to receive the accommodations necessary to thrive, simply because they do not fit within the traditional structures of our education system. They deserve to be seen, to be heard, and to receive an education tailored to their individual needs.

I previously worked in the financial aid office at Oregon State University, where I witnessed firsthand the challenges students face in navigating the higher education system—especially first-generation college students and students with disabilities. As a first-generation college student myself, I remember how difficult it was to figure out where to go for support, how to access resources, and how to advocate for myself. Now, as a parent, I think about how much harder that process is for students with disabilities who must navigate not only a complicated system but also additional barriers to accessibility.

Right now, my child is in the K-12 system, where I, as a parent, can advocate for the support they need. However, I worry about what will happen when they enter college. In higher education, parents are often unable to advocate for their children due to FERPA regulations, leaving students with disabilities to navigate complex systems on their own. Without proper institutional support, many students struggle to access the resources they need to be successful. This is not just my concern as a parent—it is a concern for every family raising a child with a disability. We need to ensure that colleges and universities are equipped to provide the necessary accommodations and services so that students with disabilities do not face unnecessary barriers to their success.

My work as a school board member has reinforced my belief that we must do more to ensure that students with disabilities are not forgotten. Too often, these students face barriers that prevent them from fully participating in their education, whether due to a lack of accommodations, limited resources, or systemic oversight. We must do better. The Students with Disabilities Success Workgroup established by SB 979 is a crucial

step in identifying and addressing these barriers in higher education. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, including students themselves, this workgroup will ensure that the voices of those most impacted are at the table when decisions about their education are being made.

I support SB 979 because I want a successful future not only for my own children but for all students who need additional support in school. I want to be able to look at my children and know that they will have the resources they need to succeed in college. By passing this bill, we are making a commitment to providing students with disabilities the tools they need to thrive in higher education and beyond.

Thank you for your time and for considering this critical legislation. I urge you to support SB 979 and stand with students with disabilities in their fight for educational equity.

**With gratitude,**

**Miriam Cummins  
Parent & Community Leader**