

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

My name is Megan Sykes, and I am a student in the Oregon State University Honors College. I am here today to speak in support of Senate Bill 979.

In Fall 2007, I had just graduated from Chemeketa and transferred to OSU as an Oregon Community College Association Outstanding Student Scholar. I had educational and career plans that felt within reach and the world was mine.

Then my life changed in a moment. A large branch fell in front of my car on Highway 99. I was lucky to survive. I seemed mostly fine initially but the physical trauma caused a previously undiagnosed genetic condition to “activate” and I became very ill. Because my insurance would not continue coverage unless I was enrolled in school, I was forced to continue taking classes instead of taking a leave.

During my first time at OSU, I encountered faculty frequently ignoring what little accommodations I had or weaponizing them against me. The discrimination caused my health to deteriorate to the point that I was unable to care for myself, and I eventually dropped out of OSU.

In September 2024, I returned to OSU. It took me 13 years to recover physically from my last attempt to finish my education. While many things have changed in that time, as a leader in the disability spaces on campus, the stories that I am hearing from other students are all too familiar. Deaf students not receiving interpreters. Students being told their accommodations are a burden. Disability Access Services thinking of themselves as a compliance office for federal funding and not a part of student services.

The disabled community is still shut out of academia. These spaces will never be made for disabled people until we start occupying space within institutions with appropriate support from financial aid, scholarships, faculty, disability services, and from you here today.

Thank you for your time, and I hope that I can count on your support of Senate Bill 979.