

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

My name is Joie Beasley-Bennett, and I am a student at Oregon State University. I am here today to speak in support of SB 979, which would require the HECC to convene a Students with Disabilities Success Workgroup.

As a transfer student from Lane Community College to OSU, I have gained a unique first hand perspective on the effects training instructors on disability accommodations have on student success.

I have experienced much more difficulty receiving my accommodations at Oregon State University than I did at Lane. I have encountered many professors at OSU who did not receive adequate instruction on how to interpret or implement my accommodations and one who actively denied my right to use my accommodations.

Last winter, I took a required physiology class from a new instructor at OSU. In the second week of classes, I missed an in-class quiz due to medical issues. I emailed the professor, requesting a makeup quiz in compliance with my accommodations at the institution, and he unequivocally denied my request. I then spent the next 8 weeks of the term speaking with him, the department head, Disability Accommodation Services, and the Equal Opportunity office in an effort to receive my accommodation. I sent dozens of emails, set up multiple hour-long meetings with administrative faculty, and met with the professor himself many times over the term. Multiple times, I was assured by the department head that I would receive my accommodations, only to meet with the professor to hear that he still would not be providing them. The instructor's actions resulted in his termination for unlawful discrimination.

I have encountered a less extreme version of this many times at OSU, which I found very confusing after my experiences at Lane. I never once encountered issues with accessing accommodations there, despite the accommodations being the same. Due to this, I believe it to be an issue at the institutional level. Instructors at OSU are not required to complete any accommodations-related training before teaching their first course, nor are they given adequate support from administration on how to implement these accommodations within their specific curriculum, which is in stark contrast to the robust system in place at Lane. At OSU, it is often left up to the student to be the sole proponent of their own success, which is a variable susceptible to many outside factors that should not be of consideration in any student's ability to complete a degree in higher education.

I believe that setting a higher standard of conduct across institutions in Oregon could have prevented my experiences at OSU and could prevent situations like mine from happening to other disabled students trying to access higher education.

Thank you for your time, and I hope that I can count on your support of SB 979!