

Good morning Chair Fredrick, Vice Chairs, Weber and members of the committee,

My name is Teresa Alonso Leon, and I am the former State Representative of House District 22, and former Chair of the House Higher Education Committee, I'm now a consultant and lobbyist for CAPACES Leadership Institute and the program lead for the Oregon Community Table on Postsecondary Education and Training also known as OCTPET, which is Oregon's first community based statewide advocacy group on postsecondary education. I am speaking today in support of SB 979: HECC Student with Disabilities Success Workgroup.

As a former state legislator, I met with many students and they expressed many challenges that I thought had been resolved since I was in college.

To better understand the challenges our students faced, I thought it would be a great idea to form a taskforce and tour the state to hear directly from our students and institutions. With the help of key partners like the HECC, and the Oregon Student Association (OSA) we passed [HB 2590](#) in 2021 and in 2022, the Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education (JTUSHE) was officially implemented with eight legislators representing the house and senate. Among our eight legislators, Chair Fredrick served on this Task Force with me.

After hearing from many students, particularly from our students with disabilities, we learned that our higher education system falls short in many ways and no office of disabilities is consistent in student services and funding. Further, for some students, if they chose to take some time off before starting college or are adults coming back to college after raising their kids, access to services are almost impossible because the student most likely will have to foot the bill to get assessed which can cost hundreds of dollars and time, seriously impacting the support services needed in their classrooms.

Following our statewide tour, we also formed three workgroups to create policy ideas. Among the many ideas that came from our workgroups, I am proud to say that SB 979 was among the policy ideas that came out of the Task Force work.

On behalf of OCTPET's close to 100 statewide members, I hope that I can count on your support of SB 979: HECC Student with Disabilities Success Workgroup.

As a former member of the House committee on Education and Chair of the Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education (JTUSHE) I urge you to pass this bill, which has no fiscal impact.