



March 6, 2025

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

Portland Community College (PCC) strongly supports Senate Bill 979, which directs the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to conduct a comprehensive study aimed at enhancing post-secondary educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This initiative aligns with PCC's commitment to inclusivity and equal access to education for all students.

Recognizing disability as a natural part of human diversity, PCC's Accessible Ed & Disability Resources (AEDR) department supports the PCC community by fostering inclusive environments, promoting universal design, and providing resources to enhance accessibility.

Convening an advisory group that includes representatives from disability advocacy organizations, students, and faculty experienced in supporting students with disabilities, is a crucial step toward identifying and addressing the unique challenges faced by these students. This inclusive approach ensures that the voices of those directly impacted are heard and considered in the development of policies and practices that affect their educational experiences.

The bill's broad definition of disabilities—including intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, neurodiverse conditions, vision impairments, deafness and hearing impairments, acquired brain injuries, and acquired spinal injuries—reflects an understanding of the diverse needs of our student population. This comprehensive perspective is essential for creating an educational environment that accommodates all individuals.

By supporting SB 979, we take a significant step toward ensuring that all students have equitable access to higher education opportunities. We urge the legislature to pass this bill and demonstrate Oregon's commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let us know if you have any questions.

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