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Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and Senators Gelser, Robinson, and Sollman:

My name is Julia Greenfield. I reside in Senate District 23 in northeast Portland. I appreciate your taking time this morning to listen to testimony on Senate Bill 977, which would create integrated and inclusive college programming for post-secondary Oregon students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Thank you for sponsoring this important bill.

I am submitting this testimony in writing, given that live testimony was unfortunately closed to virtual registrants this morning due to time constraints.

I am testifying today as the parent of two young adults. My daughter Amelia is 21 years old. Amelia enjoys old movies, vintage fashion, and creative writing. She attended Grant High School. She works at the Holladay Park Plaza retirement center in Portland as a kitchen and dining room aide. My son Gabriel is 17. He still attends Grant High School. Gabriel, like many of his peers, appears to primarily enjoy playing video games and eating fast food with his friends. He has worked at Subway Sandwich and currently runs an online resale business.

My two young adult children have very different interests, dreams, goals, and priorities. In addition, my son Gabriel happens to be neurotypical, and my daughter Amelia experiences an intellectual disability. But one thing Amelia and Gabriel have in common is that they were both raised with the expectation that they would begin working as soon as they were legally old enough to hold a job, and that they would attend college when they finished high school. They grew up with the expectation that they would be lifelong learners and lifelong contributors to their communities.

In elementary school, middle school, and high school, I honestly don't think it ever occurred to Amelia to doubt whether she would be able to attend college. As a high schooler, Amelia understood that she received special education services and that she would graduate high school with a modified diploma. But the value of lifelong learning had been ingrained in Amelia since her infancy, and to Amelia and to us, the logical next step after high school was college.

For years, however, my husband and I had privately wondered whether we would be able to do right by Amelia in supporting her career and educational goals. We spent many sleepless nights

and shed many tears worrying about whether Amelia would have the same opportunities to work and learn here in Oregon that we knew would be open to her neurotypical brother. When Amelia was still in middle school, we were thrilled to learn about Think College, a national consortium of post-secondary educational programs for college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We were doubly thrilled to learn that one of those programs was located right here in Portland at Portland State University.

Before finishing high school, Amelia visited two Think College Programs: PSU's Career and Community Studies program and the Achieve program at Highline Community College in Washington state. Amelia applied to and was accepted to both programs. She wanted to stay in Oregon and chose PSU. Amelia is now enrolled as a junior at PSU and is working to earn her certificate in Career and Community Studies.

The PSU Career and Community Studies program has been truly life-changing for Amelia. Her growth over the past two and a half years has been absolutely exponential. We attribute that growth to the program's holistic blend of academic, employment, and social supports.

As a CCS student, Amelia is constantly being challenged to make connections between what she is learning in the classroom and what she is experiencing and observing on the job and in her community. During her first and second years in the CCS program, Amelia worked as a preschool teacher's assistant at the PSU Helen Gordon child care center. As a junior, she now works off-campus at a local assisted living facility. Amelia has taken classes at PSU in human development, social work, psychology, and gerontology, all of which support her goal to work in a human services field after finishing college. For her electives, Amelia has taken several literature and film classes. She loves visiting her local library and local bookstores. This spring she participated in Multnomah County's "Everybody Reads" program. She recently became a supporting member of the Hollywood Theater in northeast Portland, and last year she was able to travel to Hollywood, California to attend the Turner Classic Film Festival.

Due to the breadth of holistic support provided by the CCS program, we now have no doubt, despite the years of worry, that Amelia will be able to successfully work in full-time integrated employment and live independently in her own apartment when she graduates next year.

Because the CCS program has been so life-changing for our daughter, my husband and I were deeply saddened when PSU had to pause CCS enrollment to new students due to funding constraints. Please know that an investment in the PSU CCS program is an investment in growing well-rounded and engaged Oregon residents who will go on to work in and actively participate in their communities. Thank you again for sponsoring SB 977. I urge you to vote yes on SB 977 and to encourage your colleagues to do the same. SB 977 would make possible for other Oregon youth the inclusive college education that has helped our daughter forge her identity as a working and contributing member of her community.

Sincerely,

Julia Greenfield

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