



February 15, 2021

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 564. My name is Pamela Bock and I am the assistant director for Services for Students with Children at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

Services for Students with Children is a resource and support center designed to help student parents navigate the competing demands of school, work, and family responsibilities. The office provides child care and community service referrals, parent education, financial assistance, networking, and support.

The most recent data we have on students with children at PSU is from a PSU sponsored child care needs assessment survey conducted in the spring of 2009, which determined that student parents made up approximately 21.5% of the student population. Of the student parents at PSU at that time, approximately 75 percent were women and 54 percent of these women were single parents. Though all parents pursuing a degree must balance many competing demands, the strain on single parents is especially complex and they are particularly vulnerable to the challenging dynamics of balancing family, school, and work life.

Since the child care needs assessment survey was released in 2009, PSU has expanded its support of students with children, including adding lactation rooms, building two additional flexible childcare centers, and creating more family friendly spaces. These changes greatly enhanced the visibility and support for students with children, however we have no way of concretely examining the potential positive impact that these changes had on persistence and graduation rates. Further, we have no way of determining if the number of students with children at PSU has changed significantly since 2009. Because PSU lacks this comprehensive data, it is nearly impossible to make further impactful recommendations about the specific educational needs and outcomes of student parents.

The benefits of investing in policies to support students with children can have many measurable outcomes, including recruitment, retention, GPA, and graduation rates. But without appropriate data, much of the time we spend at Services for Students with Children, is simply trying to find the student parents on campus to let them know of our services. Sometimes student parents don't

learn of our services until months into their academic journey, or even longer. By the time many reach us, they are already in crisis and falling behind. Because family status is an aspect of diversity, the ability to identify students with children before they even arrive on campus can ensure that we equip them with the financial resources, childcare services, and support needed to begin their time at PSU on equal footing with their childless peers.

The impact this information would have on our office cannot be overstated. The ability to access this data is crucial in providing us with a quantitative measurement of our investments, and is an essential and desperately needed tool to recruit, support, and retain students with children at PSU.

Thank you to Senator Gelser for championing this bill and to Chair Dembrow for sponsoring it. Thank you to the committee for this opportunity to submit my testimony in support of SB 564.

Sincerely,

Pamela Bock  
Assistant Director  
Services for Students with Children  
Portland State University