

re: HB  
2787A

3/19/13

Chair Hass and members of the committee,

My name is Jazmin Roque, I'm a student at Southern Oregon University, one of the co-chairs for OSCC, the Oregon Students of Color Coalition with the Oregon Student Association and a member of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

I would first like to give a shout out to over 100 supporters here today for tuition equity. Thank you to all the supporters filling the over-flow spaces for this hearing today. And thank to the overwhelming amount of supporters that have turned out to all previous tuition equity hearings, filling the hearing rooms with many more supporters than opponents.

My work as a representative for students of color on college campuses is rooted in the belief that education should be accessible to everyone. As a first generation college student and as a Latina I have seen and experienced firsthand the barriers that limit the opportunities and advancement of individuals, families, and communities. My parents have worked extremely hard and made so many sacrifices to ensure that the possibility of attending a university would be a reality for me. My experience at Southern Oregon University thus far has taught me that education is vital to the advancement of all persons. That's why I'm so invested in the education and success of my peers across the state of Oregon.

As a member of the OSCC board, statewide coalition of students, we advocate for equal access to education by empowering students and strengthening communities of color. Which is why in 2003, when Senate President Peter Courtney decided to introduce Tuition Equity at the request of his constituency, it immediately became a priority for Oregon students of color and the Oregon Student Association.

For 10 years now students have been organizing and talking about the need for Tuition Equity, increasing awareness and mobilizing our peers, our campuses and our communities.

As students, we recognize that this issue is not only deeply felt but widely felt and we've been working with a wide range of supporters, from business leaders, to clergy, and law enforcement.

In the past few months alone, students on the OSSC board have garnered support from all our university and community college presidents, as well as our student senates and faculty senates.

We all recognize that education is the key to a bright future for Oregon and understand that continuing to deny opportunity and success for undocumented students is ultimately holding the entire state of Oregon back.

We can't continue to let our investment in K-12 students go to waste by pricing Oregon educated students out of Oregon universities.

This bill advances Oregon's workforce AND advances Oregonians graduating from high school and pursuing a college degree.

Tuition equity would further increase Oregon's competitiveness and appeal to businesses as well as ensure that more Oregon students are able to go to college. This means increasing university revenue and Oregon's tax base.

I cannot express how incredibly humbling it has been to gather support for this issue and work with undocumented youth in Oregon. This entire experience has been eye-opening and I am so inspired by my fellow students, who even now, with little hope of affording a post-secondary degree, still have the courage to dream, waiting for the chance to become fully engaged and contributing members of our communities, waiting to help us achieve 40-40-20, waiting for us to join the 14 other states that have already passed tuition equity.

I respectfully ask, haven't we kept them waiting long enough?

Chair Hass and members of the Senate Education Committee, the time has come for us to guarantee that every Oregonian has fair access to quality, affordable higher education. Please vote yes on HB2787, tuition equity. Thank you.