



OREGON DREAMACTIVIST



To: Senate Education Committee
From: Gabriele Ross, Case Manager for Students in Transition, Evergreen Public School, Vancouver, WA
Date: March 19th, 2013
Re: Testimony in Support of Tuition Equity

Chair Hass and Members of the Committee:

My name is Gabriele Ross, and I am asking for your support of Tuition Equity legislation. Thank you very much for allowing me to submit this testimony for the record.

I work in a public school district in the state of Washington, but I live in Oregon. That allows me to be familiar with (1) an environment in one state where undocumented students are charged in-state tuition like any other resident, and (2) another state in which they are treated like international students and charged up to three times more for their college tuition.

I spend a lot of time and effort in my job counseling high school students on pursuing higher education, knowing that this is likely to double their earning potential and with that improve the economic environment for all of us. This reality has an added meaning for undocumented students and for citizens who live in the same communities as they do. It is really not difficult for me to decide if I would rather be neighbors with youth who face a permanent dead end because they are not allowed to work and cannot afford to go to college, or with young people who are able to expand their skills, their confidence, and their career options by being able to access a college education. It is also simply wrong to deny undocumented students what other resident students can take for granted.

My experience with undocumented high school graduates is that they are highly motivated or otherwise they would have never made it this far, given the particular obstacles they face. Many are also exceptionally talented and ready to make positive contributions to society. Immigrant students consistently win prestigious competitions; for example, a team of almost all immigrant students from the district where I work just won the National Science Bowl (again). A college degree will still not give them immigration status, but it will significantly increase the options available to them. And it seems that a federal solution is in the works at the federal level, which will soon put many of these youth on a path to citizenship.

Please remove this unnecessary barrier for young people who are our future. Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this testimony, and I respectfully ask the Committee to move this bill forward.

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