

Date: March 18th, 2013

RE: Tuition Equity

To: Senator Mark Hass and Members
Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Members of the Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee,

I am writing to encourage support and passage of Tuition Equity. As Coordinator of the Oregon New Sanctuary Movement, I work with congregations and community members of multiple faith backgrounds who are committed to equitable and humane laws for all, including the immigrants among us. Our organization holds that all high school graduates in Oregon, regardless of documentation status, should be afforded the same opportunity to attend Oregon colleges and further their education.

While working in Washington County schools with English language learners, I taught many students who would be affected by Tuition Equity. Those students were some of the most hard-working and diligent students that I have ever taught. They did not come to Oregon on their own. Once here, students like them are in a bind. Although they must attend high school, it may not be possible for them to advance beyond a high school diploma. This hurts all of us. Why should we deny a talented student from accessing education that could drastically improve his or her life and augment that young person's contribution to our communities?

If we deny undocumented students who have completed at least three years of high school in Oregon the opportunity to attend college at the same tuition rate as other students, we are putting a ceiling on what they may achieve and not capitalizing on our investment in them throughout K-12.

We are not asking for something that other students don't have; only to give an equal opportunity to talented, hard-working and motivated students who only need a level playing field to make something more of their lives and to contribute to our state.

Tuition Equity would remove one obstacle for these students, who simply want a chance to continue their education. Please fight for and pass this legislation for these students and for the well-being of all Oregonians.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Sincerely,

(signed) Mira Conklin
Coordinator, Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice
formerly Oregon New Sanctuary Movement