

April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013

Chair Dembrow and members of the committee,

My name is Colton Johnson and I am a student at Western Oregon University. I have been going to school for the past year and a half. Throughout my college experience, I have dedicated a good portion of my time to participation in student and faculty led LGBTQIA on-campus organizations. Being able to assist this often marginalized community in any way possible has been immensely rewarding and utterly fulfilling for me. Thus, the needs and expectations of the students in that community weigh very heavily on my mind and are on the forefront of my activism.

In past years, the way that members of the LGTBQIA community have been treated both on and off campus has made drastic improvements. However, there are still many issues that need to be addressed before a sense of equality can fully be attained. One of the greater issues that need to be taken care of is the fact that although most campuses would acknowledge that they have an LGBTQIA population, they have no way of definitively quantifying that population. This presents a problem in that the population takes on intangibility and so, the problems which are pertinent to them can go unacknowledged. With the help of HB 2995, students such as me could elect to indicate their orientation so that their respective universities and colleges could have a greater understanding of their LGBTQIA student demographic. As a result of this, the university could then identify any disparities within their student population as well as be able to give their LGBTQIA students a statistically more definitive voice when dealing with issues directly related to them.

Personally as a student, I feel that if this bill were to be passed, I would be able to more confidently pursue my degree. The reason being is that I know that my school would be able to have a deeper understanding of myself as a student and be able to respect that. I am able to fully support this bill because it acknowledges the fact that not everyone is as comfortable with discussing their orientation as I am and makes doing so entirely voluntary. I feel that if our universities and community colleges were expected to include sexual orientation as an option for students, faculty, and staff to self-identify, then we would finally be able to have a substantial understanding and representation of the LGBTQIA population. I ask this committee to recognize the existence of marginalized communities on our college and university campuses and pass HB 2995 out of committee. Thank you so much for your time.

Respectfully,

Colton Johnson  
Western Oregon University student