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May 9, 2013

Chair Hass, Members of the Committee:

My name is Steven Leider and I am here today to testify in support of HB 2995 regarding gathering demographic data concerning sexual orientation in higher education.

Presently I am a graduate student at Oregon State University in the Master's in Interdisciplinary Studies Program. My three areas of study focus on women studies, ethnic studies, and adult higher education. My research focuses on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students seeking to replace lost familial funding after being dispossessed by parents following the student coming out (self disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity) or being outed (someone *other* than the student revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity) to their family. For six years prior to beginning my graduate studies I was professional faculty at Oregon State as director of LGBT Outreach & Services within the Office of Intercultural Student Services. For eight years prior to moving to Corvallis I worked at UCLA's LGBT Campus Resource Center as a student affairs officer. Altogether I have worked in the field of student affairs in American higher education for fifteen years.

I proposed to my Representative, Sara Gelsler, that she sponsor the legislation that ultimately became HB 2995 because, as a result of my graduate research and my work as a student affairs professional, I came to realize that there is virtually no demographic data anywhere in higher education literature about LGBTQ college students. In contrast, we have large bodies of knowledge on many other student populations, including Black/African American, Latina/Latino, Asian-Pacific Islander, Native American/Indian, Women, parent, graduate, commuter, veteran, older-than-average, non-traditional, community college, athlete, engaged, disengaged, low socioeconomic status, privileged, gifted, profoundly gifted, mental health-challenged, disabled/differently-abled, first generation, returning, transfer, reverse transfer, international, rural, urban, suburban, remedial, and other college students. These bodies of knowledge grow larger by the day. This is not the case with our body of knowledge about LGBTQ students.

This dearth of demographic data severely hinders any kind of empirical research from being conducted about this largely invisible student population. Consequently, we have no idea how successful our efforts at recruitment and retention of LGBTQ students are, nor do we in the Oregon higher education community have any idea about the graduation or drop out rates of LGBTQ college students within the state. These are the most basic evaluative units by which

success or failure of access and equity judgments are made in our education systems, and yet, we can't provide answers to these simple and most basic questions about admission and completion rates.

At a time when we in higher education are being asked to justify our budgets and prove the success of our education programs, this is an important shortcoming within the system; one that is overcome by passage of this simple piece of legislation. It enables us to gather data that will help us to evaluate and assess the success, or failure, of our current programming efforts on behalf one of the state's most underserved and invisible college student populations.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Again, I urge your support for HB 2995.