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To: Senate Education Committee

From: Dave Coburn, Associated Students of Portland State University Legislative Affairs Director

Re: Support for HB 2995

Good afternoon Chair Hass and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. For the record, my name is Dave Coburn and I am speaking on behalf of the Oregon Student Association. I am urging support for House Bill 2995.

Many people perceive Portland to be a place that is always friendly and open to LGBTQ people. As an openly gay student this perception does not represent my experience. While I am very open with my friends and colleagues on the Portland State Campus I have at times hidden my identity out of concern for my physical safety while on campus. According to *Too Afraid to Learn*, a 2008 survey of over 3,500 Oregon college students, over half concealed their sexual orientation on campus for fear of personal safety, discrimination or rejection. I concealed my identity entirely for these reasons until my junior year of college and did not encounter important resources until mid-way through that year.

Without standardized data collection, Oregon colleges and universities won't be able to accurately assess and appropriately address the experiences of LGBT students, faculty and staff. Not everyone wears a big neon sign explaining their sexuality to others, so it can be difficult to accurately assess the needs and experiences of students without making a concerted effort to hear from students, especially those who choose to conceal their identity. Updating data collection forms on our campuses will allow students the option to self-identify and will equip campuses with important information to assess recruitment and retention rates more accurately. Passing this legislation is a non-intrusive way to begin to understand the needs and experiences of Oregon's LGBTQ students.

Clear, consistent data collection helps ensure that Oregon's public institutions of higher education have the tools they need to meet all students' needs. HB 2995 would:

- Allow students, faculty and staff of public universities and colleges the option to identify their sexual orientation on forms collecting demographic information.
- Collect consistent data to help replicate successes and address disparities.
- Create the opportunity to collect data voluntarily. (Disclosure is not mandated.)

This bill has received the support of the Oregon University System and is a small common sense step towards assessing and breaking down disparities. Thank you for your time, I am happy to take questions.