

Good morning Chair Dembrow and members of the committee. My name is Edith Gomez Navarrete and I'm a student at the University of Oregon. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. I'm testifying in favor of House Bill 2787 for tuition equity and have been speaking out for a couple of years now, so some of you may have heard me before.

I was born in Arcelia Guerrero Mexico, and then a year later brought into this country illegally by my parents who were in search of a better life for their children. I have lived in Eugene Oregon my whole life; in fact I even have the honor of attending college there. Eugene is the only home I have ever known.

I grew up just like any normal kid, with dreams and aspirations of doing something amazing in life and achieving milestones like getting that first job, traveling abroad, obtaining a driver's license, and most importantly, going to college. Little did I know, my life was going to be anything but normal.

I first learned of my undocumented-ness when I was in second grade. Initially I didn't understand what being undocumented entailed. Then in high school, the reality of what it meant to be undocumented struck. Forget about getting a permit, traveling with my friends, getting that job that would get me closer to independence, I was not going to be able to go to college.

In my mind it was going to be working in the fields or school, so I chose school. I was in the honors program as well as in Eugene International High School, taking a full IB curriculum, national honor society, college now courses and was a Varsity Tennis Player. And am proud to say that I was a recipient of the International Baccalaureate Diploma for IHS as well as the honors diploma for Churchill High School, but none of this mattered.

I still wasn't going to be allowed to go to college. I grew up seeing a lot of my peers give up, and that was one of the most discouraging sites to see, but somehow there are those students out there like me who didn't give up hope.

My sophomore year I was removed from the home by DHS due to abuse in the home. It was because of this that I was granted a U-Visa. Raquel Hecht who is present here today was the immigration attorney who helped me be able to stay in the country. I am still working towards citizenship and it will take me a few years and will cost money. Even with this visa, I still was not going to be granted in state tuition. I was facing a \$30,000 international student tuition fee.

Then once again I was faced with having to battle for a right to be in the classroom. They say that college is a match to be made, not a prize to be won, and I 100% agree, but let there be an equal playing field. It took the University of Oregon's committee to decide if I would be granted in state tuition, which I was fortunate to receive.

I for once in a long time was no longer facing a closed door, since someone took the time to see how wrong it was to deny a diligent hard working student like me, an opportunity to a higher education. While I am thankful for the opportunity given to me, I can't help but think of the others who may not be as lucky, which is why I am here to ask that you give these great minds an opportunity to show you how much they can put into this country that we call our home. Thank you.