

TO: Senate Education Committee
FR: Neola Young, Q Center and Oregon Safe Schools
& Communities Coalition
DA: February 26, 2015
RE: Testimony on SB 473



Chair Roblan and Members of the Committee:

My name is Neola Young and I manage a Safe Schools Project collaborative with the Q Center and the Oregon Safe Schools & Communities Coalition, a project which seeks to see all Oregon youth succeed with happy, healthy, and safe lives, and I am providing this testimony on behalf of our organizations in support of Senate Bill 473, which would create policies and procedures that expand data collection in our higher education institutions to include sexual orientation and will create a structure in which all students will be recognized by preferred first names.

SB 473 is important to our organizations and communities because we support efforts to build better data collection systems that actively include sexual orientation. What we know is that gay and transgender people are at higher risk for depression, anxiety, suicide, substance abuse, and non-completion of school in comparison to their straight peers¹. Our colleges and universities may not be prepared to meet the needs of gay and transgender students and staff, and data collection that gives a clearer picture of who is in our higher education institutions is a key to creating better policies and procedures to meet their needs. Gay and transgender students too often leave these schools due to harassment and isolation, and schools who are unable to respond with interventions. If we want all college students to graduate and continue into the working world and contribute to a growing Oregon economy, we must make sure their needs are met to do so.

SB 473 gives Oregon colleges & universities the tools they need: Clear, consistent data collection helps ensure that Oregon's public institutions of higher education have the tools they need to meet all students' needs. It allows students, faculty and staff of public universities and colleges to identify their sexual orientation on forms collecting demographic information, which can be voluntary. When data is consistently collected and used to design better informed policies and procedures, our higher education institutions can replicate successes and address disparities.

Additionally, SB 473 also highlights another key part of student success: names. While we know that official documents like transcripts and federally regulated documents must include legal names, college and university learning systems, student ID systems,

¹ US Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2020. Available from: <http://www.hhs.gov>

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and class rosters can focus on using preferred first names. Many students use nicknames, shortened versions of legal names, or have chosen a new name altogether. For some people, these names carry validation of their identity, but the process of changing your name legally can be cumbersome due to court costs.

The dash one amendments make clear that the changes will include systems with the highest interactions with students, e.g. class rosters, while official college and university systems maintaining confidential records will still include legal and/or official names. We support this clarification that keeping both names on record is possible and feasible.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,

Neola Young