



635 NE Dekum St, Portland, OR, 97211 | (503) 286-0477 | www.orstudents.org | @OregonStudents

Hearing for SB 473 LGBTQ Data Collection
February 26th, 2015
Christian Mello, Lane Community College

Chair Roblan, Vice chair Knopp, and members of the committee,

My name is Christian Mello, I am a student at Lane Community College and today I am here with the Oregon Student Association to express my support for Senate Bill 473 and share with you why I believe this legislation is necessary.

I have been a student at Lane Community College since 2008, and I am a computer science major. In the two years I took off of school I began to learn a lot more about myself; such as coming to terms with my bisexuality. When I was able to afford college again, I returned and had a hard time finding community or resources on campus that would help me better understand my identity.

It took me investigating on my own and joining my college's LGBTQ student union to really discover what it meant to provide services for LGBTQ students on campus, or even what it means to be an LGBTQ individual. I learned that I am a part of a large and proud community of individuals that want to be heard, but oftentimes are misunderstood by institutions because we are considered too small.

It took me using the resources of my fellow students to learn how to advocate for myself and other members of the LGBTQ community. In fact the only resource for LGBTQ students or faculty or staff or that matter is a student government position, the Gender and Sexual Diversity Advocate, who is me. We need professional support staff and resources on campus, I know this because of the students I work with every day. With clear and consistent data collection across the state decision makers like yourselves will have even more information at your disposal which will help compare outcomes and disparities among our student population.

This bill also allows students to use a preferred first name rather than a legal name on certain college documents such as class listings, student directories, and student ID cards. This is crucial for transgender students, survivors of domestic violence and victims of stalking to be able to change a first name without having to jump through legal barriers which can often times be costly. SB 473 is a simple bill that will help institutions better support the students they are meant to serve.

Thank you very much for your time today.

Christian Mello
Lane Community College