



TO: Senate Education Committee
FR: CM Hall, Board of Directors, Basic Rights Oregon
DA: February 26, 2015
RE: Support for SB 473

Chair Roblan, Vice Chair Knopp and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 473. My name is CM Hall. I coordinate the Western Region Interpreter Education Center at Western Oregon University, and have worked in higher education for nine years. I am also a member of the board of directors at Basic Rights Oregon, the state's leading advocacy organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities, representing tens of thousands of Oregonians from every corner of this state. We strongly urge passage of SB 473.

SB 473 is a simple bill and I would like to take a moment to walk through it. It would require public universities and colleges to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of routine demographic data already collected on existing forms. It allows universities and colleges to update their forms at the time of reprinting to avoid incurring additional costs for new forms. And, like any other demographic information, it is optional for anyone filling out the form to participate by disclosing information regarding status. It would also require public universities and colleges to allow students to use a first name other than their legal first name on campus records; such as class lists, school directories, student ID cards and diplomas. This is a modest but important proposal to collect important information to address disparities and protect the safety and privacy of students.

According to *Too Afraid to Learn*, a 2008 survey of more than 3,500 Oregon college students, a hostile campus climate has a significant impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. The findings included the fact that 10% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students took more than five years to graduate due to anti-LGBT sentiment. More than half of LGBT students concealed their sexual orientation on campus for fear of personal safety, discrimination or rejection. And more than 60 percent of all students reported witnessing instances of homophobia, ranging from homophobic language to violence.

As university staff, data collection matters to me both personally and professionally. I want all students to get the support they need to thrive at Western and ensure they are empowered to do so. Faculty and staff strive to provide this support individually. Collecting data on the experiences of students, faculty and staff would help our institutional practices catch up to our individual practices. Allowing students to list a preferred name will also allow faculty and staff to better respect the identities of students and increase their comfort on campus.

Clear, consistent data collection would allow Oregon colleges and universities to accurately assess and appropriately address the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

students, faculty and staff. SB 473 would allow students, faculty and staff to identify their sexual orientation and gender identity on forms collecting demographic information, without mandating collection.

SB 473 allows colleges and universities to replicate successes and address disparities—and that strengthens Oregon colleges for ALL students. **Basic Rights Oregon fully supports SB 473 in its entirety and we urge the Committee to move it forward.**