

IFS TESTIMONY TO SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE SB 473 FEBRUARY 26, 2015

CHAIR ROBLAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE,

FOR THE RECORD MY NAME IS JEFF DENSE, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY AND PRESIDENT OF THE INTERINSTITUTIONAL FACULTY SENATE (IFS). WE REPRESENT THE FACULTY OF OREGON'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.

IFS SUPPORTS THE PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVENESS AND ACCESS FOR ALL IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN OREGON. SENATE BILL 473'S REQUIRING ALL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO ALLOW STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF TO CHANGE THEIR FIRST NAMES AND SELF-IDENTIFY SEXUAL ORIENTATION ON FORMS USED TO COLLECT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SENDS A CLEAR AND CONVINCING MESSAGE TO THE L.B.G.T. COMMUNITY THAT THE STATE OF OREGON CONTINUES TO STAND FOR THE CORE VALUE OF INCLUSIVENESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF SB 473, IFS WOULD OFFER TWO SUGGESTIONS ROOTED IN BEST PRACTICES FOR THE COMMITTEE TO CONTEMPLATE. FIRST, UNIVERSITIES NATIONWIDE (E.G., TUFTS, DUKE, OREGON) PROVIDE STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO "FILL IN" THEIR GENDER ON HOUSING AND/OR ADMISSION APPLICATIONS AS OPPOSED TO A 'CHECKING THE BOX' REPORTING STRATEGY. THIS FILL IN FORMAT EVADES THE 'PIDGEONHOLING' OF PRE-OPERATIVE TRANSEXUAL STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF. SECONDLY, IFS CONSIDERS THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN TO BE A LEADER IN PREFERRED FIRST NAME BEST PRACTICE, AS STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF CAN UNILATERALLY INDICATE A PREFERRED FIRST

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NAME TO APPEAR ALONGSIDE OR INSTEAD OF A 'LEGAL' NAME. IFS URGES THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER THIS 'ALONG SIDE' OPTION, AS THE CURRENT LANGUAGE OF SB 473 DOES NOT INDICATE THIS OPTION IS AVAILABLE.

ALONG WITH AFFORDABILITY, ACCESS IS ONE OF THE LINCHPINS OF THE STATE'S AMBITIOUS 40/40/20 GOALS, AND IS CONSISTENT WITH TITLE IX AND OREGON'S ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS. TAKING ON A NEW NAME, AND BEING ALLOWED THE FREEDOM TO SELF-REPORT ONE'S SEXUAL IDENTITY, IS OFTEN THE FIRST STEP IN AN INDIVIDUALS TRANSITION TOWARDS LIVING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR GENDER IDENTITY. SENATE BILL 473 IS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN ENSURING AN INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY IN OREGON.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, AND I WOULD BE GLAD TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.