

**Testimony in Support SB 932 before the Senate Education Committee**

**March 24, 2015**

**Mayra Martinez-Reyes, PSU Student and member of Oregon DREAMers**

Chair Roblan, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you all today to give my testimony in support of SB 932 Access to Opportunity.

My name is Mayra Martinez, I'm a student at Portland State University and I live in Beaverton. Growing up in the US and attending college has been a challenge many face, including myself. Everyone around us tells us to get good grades and go to college. As of May 2013 that opportunity expanded for undocumented students like me to access higher education through the Tuition Equity bill.

I want to thank you all who helped pass Tuition Equity. While Tuition Equity was a huge step forward, college is not a cheap investment even with in-state tuition rates. Portland State University costs me a grand total for one year of \$15,000, and that's without living on campus. Who has \$15,000 saved in a bank account at my age? The reality is that paying for college continues to be a HUGE barrier for many, and even more so for students that are ineligible to apply for federal or state level financial aid like myself.

As an Oregon DREAMers member, I have had multiple conversations with undocumented middle and high school students. The main question always asked is how can I pay for college? It's not an easy question to answer especially when some come to me in private to claim their undocumented status. Right now, they are ineligible for financial aid or loans.

I was lucky enough to get a scholarship to pay for my schooling but not many get the same chance. Scholarships are very limited and only a few actually get them. It's difficult explaining to other students that scholarships are not enough to pay for five years of college (I say five because it's not common to finish a college degree in four anymore). As an advocate for higher education, and a student myself, being able to apply for Oregon's Opportunity grant will make it possible for many awaiting this chance to enter a university without the fear of leaving due to the cost.

Thank you once again for giving me the chance to share my story; I urge your support of SB 932 Access to Opportunity.