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March 24th, 2015

To: Senate Education Committee
From: Yair Buendia
RE: SB 932 Access to Opportunity

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

My name is Yair Buendia I am a student at OSU and I'm representing Juventud Faceta and OSU Mecha. I am here today to share my experiences of why Senate Bill 932 Access to Opportunity is a basic human right and how it benefits not just us undocumented students but also Oregon as a whole.

At the age of nine I was brought to the United States by my parents without a choice. They brought me here because they wanted to give me a better future. They always encouraged me to achieve a higher education until they realized how expensive college is. After they realized how it expensive it was, they stopped motivating me. They got scared by looking at the prices of education, yes education. However, being part of AVID in high school and having great teachers and counselors encouraged me that I should go to college, even though I wouldn't qualify for federal aid, school scholarships, and had many other barriers in my way, but I had the potential to do it.

Senior year of high school was probably the most defining year of my life. After hours of writing essays, asking for letters of recommendation, while keeping up with school work, I managed to receive six out of ten scholarships I applied to. Thanks to the Singer, Rotary Foundation, and many more people in Eugene for the support I was a step closer to reaching my dream of becoming a Civil Engineer. However, my friends and classmates weren't able to fulfil their dreams because they don't qualify for any other type of financial assistance. This is heartbreaking for me, because I know that they can also help contribute to the Oregon economy if they were able to receive a higher education. Some of them are currently working or attending community college but money is an issue because if they aren't able to transfer in next 2 years, they will not be eligible for in state tuition at any Oregon Public University.

Only one of the six scholarships I received is renewable, meaning I have to keep applying to a limited amount of scholarships yearly. I am worried because if I don't finish my degree in 5 year I would get charged international fees, and I obviously don't have to money to pay that amount. All I am asking is for an equal opportunity for all Oregonians to achieve a higher education. I know it is up to you, if you want to help us reach our dreams or destroy them. That is why I ask you to support SB 932. Thank you.

Yair Buendia
Oregon State University