



TO: Joint Sub-Committee on Education
FR: CM Hall, Board of Directors, Basic Rights Oregon
DA: May 28, 2015
RE: Support for SB 473

Co-Chairs Komp and Monroe, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 473. My name is CM Hall and 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 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. These form updates would be complete at the time 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.

It is estimated that the fiscal impact of this legislation will be \$53,000 for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to work with community colleges to determine and report on methods for community colleges to implement this while administering the over all implementation of the bill. This is a small investment when you consider the positive impact this data collection will have for LGBTQ students in Oregon.

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.

Basic Rights Oregon fully supports SB 473 in its entirety and we urge the Committee to move it forward.