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To: Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Jenna Allen

RE: SB 231

Hello Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Olsen, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jenna Allen and I am a student at Central Oregon Community College and I am your constituent of yours in district 52. I want to talk to you today about the Mental Health and Neurodivergence Research or in other words, SB 231.

In my younger years, my siblings and I bounced a lot between family members and schools. I was the First person on one side of my family to ever have completed high school on time, to not have a criminal record, and to have never had experienced substance abuse. I will be the first person in my family to have ever graduate from college if I am able to complete my degree.

This Fall term I experienced a situation in which I needed to change my on-campus housing for mental health reasons. I had nowhere to isolate myself to study, and my dorm roommates did things that were very oppressive. I would stay at the library until late hours of the night in order to have a healthy space to do my school work where I could focus.

I reached out to the administration responsible for housing about the difficulties I was having with my current living situation and requested to be moved to a single room. They told me that there was no way to accommodate this need. They said that the dorms were over capacity and they did not have any single units available. They told me that if the situation were to get worse to reach out to them. After I had an anxiety attack in a common space of the resident's hall I was approached by admin. I expressed my inability to sleep in my current living situation. They told me that I was going to have to provide medical documentation of my Mental Health issues, because I was not able to afford a single unit on my own.

I found out that I would have to change my primary care provider in order to get the proper documentation of need. A friend of mine took me to the emergency room, during this visit I was connected to a primary care physician and diagnosed with anxiety and depression. I received a doctor's note that recommended I be placed into an individual housing unit. I submitted this documentation, and admin gave me the contact information for the ADA person on campus. This was about a month after I had raised initial concern. I was experiencing daily anxiety attacks and was struggling to stay focused on my school work and ended up having to drop one of my classes. At this point I was having suicidal thoughts.

In order to live in on campus student housing, you have to maintain a 12-credit course load. This added to the stress and anxiety that I was already experiencing. Once I provided them the documentation from the ADA advocate on campus, it took an additional 3 days to be



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provided my own unit. I had a conversation with my on-campus counselor about the situation and she told me that one administrator had made a comment that I “didn’t look depressed enough” and he didn’t realize that I was experiencing such difficulties.

My mental health affects just about everything in my life- especially school. If my anxiety is high I tend to panic over whether or not I’m even going to pass the classes I’m in. I’ve had anxiety attacks in class and even in front of teachers. Then at night or after long days, my depression hits me. And suddenly I’m struggling to even function at all. Homework goes from being a simple assignment to a massive and unclimbable mountain. I get overwhelmed so much that I basically have to fight myself to even get out of bed and go to class.

I see this legislation to be an imperative service to students. In my experience, campus staff and administration do not have the tools to support me in my time of need. I urge you to support this bill so that we are able to identify the gaps in resources available to students with mental health needs, which will make it easier for students like myself to finish their degree programs and succeed. I am counting on you to support this bill and in turn, students across the state experiencing situations in which they are choosing between their own mental health and their pursuit of a higher education?