



Senator Michael E. Dembrow
Senate District 23

February 7, 2018

Chair Roblan and Committee Members:

SB 1563 will allow us to protect Oregon's successful tuition equity program, which allows affordable access to higher education to Oregon for Oregon's "Dreamers" (kids who were brought to this state as children, were raised here, and went to school here, but who lack documentation as U.S. citizens. For the last four years, it has given a number of Dreamers a path to professional skills while we're waiting to fix our broken immigration system.

When we finally passed HB 2787 in 2013, after years of bipartisan effort, and gave Oregon Dreamers access to tuition equity, it made sense for us to link eligibility for tuition equity not only to longstanding residence in Oregon, but also to existing federal programs. The U. S. Senate was on track to pass a bipartisan immigration reform package, the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) had just been created, and Dreamers were coming out of the shadows to show themselves and allow their potential to shine.

Back in 2013 we felt comfortable connecting tuition-equity eligibility to DACA eligibility and requiring that applicants have filed for a federal tax I.D. number. But today, according to the state's leading immigration attorneys, this connection puts Dreamers at risk, as they again find themselves the collateral damage of a broken immigration



system. For now, we must make sure that their access to state-based tuition equity and financial aid is separated from decisions made in Washington, D.C.

That's what SB 1563 will do. Students will still need to qualify based on the length of their residency, graduation from a high school (or equivalent) here in Oregon, and all the other qualifications for admission that apply to all Oregonians. They will need to file an official affidavit with the university attesting to these facts. This is the method that was used by states that had tuition equity prior to the creation of DACA.

With passage of this bill, these young people will have the confidence of knowing they can pursue their dream of higher education in expectation of this country finally getting to a more sensible immigration policy.

In addition, at the request of Oregon's universities and OHSU, SB 1563 also clarifies Oregon's compliance with 8 USC (1621(d)). This is a federal statute that allows a student who is not a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the United States to be eligible to receive scholarships and other financial aid from a public university, but it requires the Legislature to provide explicit authority to universities. SB 1563 clarifies that our universities are authorized to do so.

SB 1563 is strongly supported by a number of organizations, including the Oregon Student Association and Oregon's colleges and universities. You'll be hearing from their representatives, including some of those inspiring young Oregonians who are already demonstrating that our belief in them was well-founded, our investment in them richly rewarded but whose younger brothers and sisters are in jeopardy if we do not act.

I urge quick passage of this bill.

Sincerely,



Michael E. Dembrow

Senator, SD 23

