

TO: House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee

FROM: Edith Gomez Navarrete

SUBJECT: SB 1563 – Tuition Equity

DATE: February 22nd, 2018

Chair Reardon and Members of the Committee:

My name is Edith Gomez Navarrete. I am a first year teacher, teaching 4th grade at River Road/El Camino del Rio Elementary School in Eugene; a dual English-Spanish immersion school.

If you have been on this committee for a while, we may have met in 2013, when as a college freshman, I came here to testify in favor of the Tuition Equity bill. I am here today to ask you to support Senate Bill 1563, to save the spirit and meaning of tuition equity.

I was brought here illegally from Mexico at age 1. I don't remember Mexico, and Oregon is the only home I have ever known. I attended my local schools in the Eugene 4j school district and graduated from Churchill High School in 2012. I graduated with honors and was one of only 5 students in my class to earn the full IB – International Baccalaureate – Diploma.

In 2012, when I was first accepted at Oregon State and then the University of Oregon, I was told I would have to pay International Student Tuition of close to \$30,000 a year. I was already living on my own and supporting myself. It would have been impossible to pay \$120,000 for an undergraduate degree plus living costs. Undocumented students are ineligible for most scholarships, no matter how hard we work or how strong our academic record, because the minimum documentation requirement is permanent residency.

With Tuition Equity, my tuition costs were a third of that – \$8,000 - \$9,000 a year. Fortunately, I won a few scholarships, was able to work, and had some help with living expenses from a local minister's family. In my case, I had an unusual type of Visa, called a "U" Visa, because I was the victim of domestic violence and was removed from my home by DHS. This Visa, at the last moment, qualified me for in-state tuition. But this was not assured, and without the passage of the Tuition Equity bill, I wouldn't have had the confidence that I could finish my education.

I received my Bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Oregon in 2016 and my Master's Degree in Education from U of O last spring. A few months later, I began teaching in Eugene. I love teaching, and feel it is what I was meant to do. I have a class of 32 students and love every one of them, work very hard, and am seeing solid success.

It hasn't been easy. When I was in high school, many of my friends saw no sense in even completing high school, because college seemed unattainable, and many dropped out. Without Tuition Equity, there was truly no possible chance we could ever pay for college. All we want is an opportunity. Look what happened when I had the opportunity. When we talk about the need to diversify Oregon's teaching force so we can better reach all kids – they are talking about me.

Oregon needs to pass SB1563 to keep these opportunities alive, so young people have a reason to finish high school, and have an opportunity to meet their potential. We just want to find the chance to do what we were meant to do.

Thank you for your time.
Edith Gomez Navarrete
Eugene, Oregon