

Dear Chair Wagner and the members of the Senate Education Committee

RE: Support for Senate Bill 794

I write this in support of Senate Bill 794.

A significant number of student parents attend our public colleges and community colleges today do so while also caring for dependent children. Unfortunately, Oregon doesn't track how many of our students are student parents. Therefore we can't determine whether student parents complete college certificates or degrees at the same or different rates, whether student parents drop out at the same or different rates as students without children, take longer to obtain a degree, or merely feel they must limit their career aspirations.

National data show that 53% of student parents will not complete a degree. Only 28% of single mothers graduate with a degree or certificate within 6 years of enrollment and another 55 percent leave school before earning any college credential at all. Low-income college students with children are 25% less likely to obtain a degree than low-income adults without children.

Supporting students with children is a critical component of promoting racial and ethnic equity in education, as rates of parenthood vary substantially by race and ethnicity. Among African American female undergraduates nationwide, for example, 47 percent are raising dependent children while in school.

A college education provides dignity to the student and an opportunity for economic stability. However, the impact of a college education extends far beyond the student parent. Parents who complete or are obtaining a college degree serve as essential role models for their children, and their educational success reaches to the second and third generations. They also become income generating citizens of Oregon's economy.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 794.

Respectfully,

Beth Gebstadt,  
Portland, Oregon