

# Oregon Student Association



March 11, 2019

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Thomsen, and members of the committee,

My name is Lizbeht Marquez, I am a student at Western Oregon University (WOU) and a Policy Associate for the Oregon Student Association. I am here to ask for your support for SB 263.

Attending WOU has exposed me to people from diverse backgrounds. I believe the most impactful conversation I have had is with Berlyn, who is considered to be an international student even though she is from the Republic of Palau. Through our conversations, I have learned about her country, culture as well as her struggle to financially support herself as she pursues higher education in Oregon because she pays nonresident student tuition and fees.

This school year, Berlyn has had to work seven jobs in order to financially support herself because she does not have family in the United States who can provide for her. With the rising cost of living and tuition and fees, it is understandable that Berlyn must work. However, it is shocking that she must work seven jobs. What burdens students from the Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia, is that their tuition is much higher, and they are more likely to receive little to nothing in financial aid. It is difficult for these students to focus on their education when their priority is to make enough money to support themselves.

Berlyn's story is no different than other students who come from Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia. They struggle even more than the average college student because they are not allowed to pay at the resident tuition rate even though their island is a part of the United States.

These students are far from their support system and have yet to feel like they are a part of Oregon's community. It is critical that the Legislature acts now to pass SB 263 so that students from the Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia have an education that's accessible and affordable. This bill will provide economic relief for students and it will help them focus on their education first.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Lizbeht Marquez Gutierrez

## OREGON STUDENT ASSOCIATION

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