

**Kate Brown**  
Governor



**Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office**  
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"  
421 SW Oak Street, Portland, OR 97204  
O 503.302.9725  
Email: [oaco.mail@oregon.gov](mailto:oaco.mail@oregon.gov)

Senate Committee on Education  
*SB 794: OR Student Parent Data Collection in Oregon's*  
*Public Post-Secondary Educational Institutions*  
March 11, 2019

Chair Senator Rob Wagner, Vice Chick Thomsen, and members of the Committee,

The *Oregon Commission for Women*, in its role as an advocate for all women in Oregon, strongly supports SB 794. This bill requires the *Higher Education Coordinating Commission* to design a question allowing each student to identify whether a student is a parent. This question will be placed on all forms used to collect demographic information by public post-secondary institutions of education.

As more students enter/return to college and community college at varying times in their lives and careers in the US, the number of those who are parents have steadily increased overall. Oregon's investments in free tuition for community colleges has affected this trend as well, while support for these parent/students has struggled to keep up with demand at many campuses. Granular data on the needs of student parents is not uniformly collected making the impact of these policies on college student parents difficult to measure. Single mothers and low-income student parents face a combination of barriers that make college the completion of their degree on time more challenging, and lowering the success of their degree completion to half that of non-parent students.

Timely completion of degrees reduces the cost of higher education for the State of Oregon as well as for the students. Furthermore any efforts to support college student parents, strengthens the economy by encouraging an influx of a well-trained workforce and healthy families. It is estimated that for 2020 at least 2/3 of jobs available will require some degree of post-secondary education, raising Oregon's need for an educated workforce making family level wages.

States and organizations have become more aware of the benefits of addressing the needs of this population. California and New York, for example, have created initiatives and allocated funds to support college student parents through investments in opportunities to provide non-tuition based programs such as on-campus childcare, intensive and personalized advisement, educational supports including tutoring, and career counseling among others.

Proposed Senate Bill 794 will provide the data needed for effective student parent support by requiring public post-secondary institutions to identify whether a student is a parent on its demographic information forms. The access to this information is critical to identify areas in need of intervention, and suggest effective strategies to increase parent student success.

Thank you for this opportunity to support this bill. The Oregon Commission for Women strongly believes that this bill is a step in the right direction to support student parents, maximize our higher education efforts and resources, and to strengthen Oregon's workforce and families.

Sincerely,

Dr. Doris Cancel-Tirado, Commissioner

Dr. Barbara Spencer, Chair

**ORCommissionforWomen**

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Dr. Barbara Spencer

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