



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Policy Director
In Support of SB 859 – Tuition Equity Graduate
Senate Committee on Education
03/20/19**

Chair Wagner and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ supports SB 859, which expands Oregon’s tuition equity laws to include graduate programs, so all Oregonians can reach their full potential. More specifically, SB 859 will ensure that graduate students at public universities who qualify for tuition equity are charged resident tuition for graduate programs.

The ACLU of Oregon has a proud history of advocating for the fair treatment of all persons here in Oregon, and we understand that tuition equity is an important way to ensure that Oregon’s laws treat all students fairly. That is why we supported passage of tuition equity in 2013, which expanded access to higher education by allowing Oregon’s high school graduates to pay in-state tuition at Oregon colleges and universities, regardless of where they were born or their immigration status.² In 2015, we were grateful this legislature expanded on this policy by allowing students who qualify for tuition equity to apply for in-state financial aid. And in 2018, we supported legislation which allowed these same students access to financial aid and scholarships.

All Oregonians deserve fair and equitable access to the high quality and affordable educational opportunities provided by the Oregon’s colleges and universities.

Students who benefit from tuition equity are students who grew up in Oregon, graduated from Oregon high schools, and they are otherwise eligible for admission to an Oregon college or university on equal terms with their friends and classmates.

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 45,000 members and supporters statewide.

² Note that graduates of Oregon high schools must have attended at least three years of school in Oregon or five years in the United States, a U.S. territory or Puerto Rico immediately prior to graduation in order to qualify for tuition equity.

Tuition equity ensures these students can access the educational opportunities that they have already earned. **These students—who are our neighbors, our friends, and often our family members—are an integral part of the Oregon community.** Because there is an indisputably strong correlation between increased educational opportunities for young people and improved life chances in later years, tuition equity also enriches our state and contributes to its vibrancy.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SB 859. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.