



# American Association of University Professors

*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

March 20, 2019

Senate Committee on Education  
900 Court St.  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 859 and SB 958

Chair Wagner, and members of the Committee,

My name is Ramin Farahmandpur. I am a Professor in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy in the College of Education at Portland State University. I also serve as AAUP Oregon's Vice-President of Political Action. I am writing in support of SB 859 and SB 958.

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2787, also known as the "tuition equity" bill, into law. One of the provisions of the law is that it exempts qualifying undergraduate students who are not citizens or lawful permanent residents from paying nonresident tuition at Oregon public universities. According to a 2018 state report, between 2013 and 2018, the law increased the number of students benefiting from tuition equity from 63 to 564.

Senate Bill 859 extends this exemption to qualifying graduate students, in particular underserved students, who plan to enroll in a post-baccalaureate degree program. Further, it expands access to higher education—key to social mobility and vital to the state's economic development. Finally, aligned with the state's 40-40-20 aspirational goals, the bill boosts the state's degree attainment.

The general consensus among economists is that the earning gap between high school and college graduates has widened over the last 40 years. In 1979, for example, the earning gap between high school and college graduates was \$17,411. By 2012, however, the earning gap grew to \$34,969.

The importance of a college education is irrefutable. Research shows that between 1980 and 2005, a college education accounted for 66 percent of the total increase of earning dispersion.

Senate Bill 958, which creates the Dreamers Access Program, awards student loans to eligible undocumented students who aspire to obtain a college education. For Oregon's underserved student population, a college education increases social and economic opportunities in pursuit of the American Dream.

We urge you to vote in support of SB 859 and SB 958.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these important bills.

Ramin Farahmandpur  
Vice-President for Political Action, AAUP Oregon