

April 2, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Business and General Government  
From: Lizbeht Marquez Gutierrez  
RE: Senate Bill 854

Chair Riley, Vice-Chair Girod and members of the Committee,

My name is Lizbeht Marquez, I am a student at Western Oregon University, and I am a Policy Associate for the Oregon Student Association. I am here to ask for your support for SB 854. Over the past few years, the Oregon legislature has passed critical legislation that has allowed undocumented students to pursue higher education. Although this has been a step forward, there are still many barriers undocumented students face while trying to achieve their career goals.

As previously mentioned, undocumented students that are tuition equity eligible have access to higher education. However, there also undocumented students who are left out because they do not qualify for DACA and are therefore not granted a social security number. Undocumented students aspire to work in professions in health care, law, construction and cosmetology. These fields require specific education and additionally they require an occupational license or certification.

There are licensing boards that still exclude people from obtaining a professional license if they do not provide a social security number. Legislators must be aware that there are still a great number of people who have not been able to achieve their career goals because they do not have a social security number to provide when applying for a professional license. SB 854 would allow undocumented students who have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number or other federally issue ID numbers to also pursue their career goals.

For this reason, it is also important that the state pass legislation to ensure that occupational licensing requirements have a uniform standard because according to the East Oregonian there are approximately 150 occupational licenses in Oregon. Having a uniform standard is critical because this would allow undocumented students to consider every profession while choosing their career path. There are still many occupations that are inaccessible which prevents undocumented people from reaching their full potential.

There are always barriers that hinder undocumented students from pursuing their dreams. I see the amount of dedication my undocumented peers put into their education. However, I can also see that they are trying to pursue a degree in a profession that would not recognize them for lack of documentation. By every means, these students have the education and skills necessary to qualify them to practice in their chosen profession. It is wrong to deny them the opportunity to succeed. Removing this barrier would allow undocumented students to consider all careers when pursuing higher education or training as a middle-skilled worker. They have so much potential and skills that are waiting to be used. This is a community that takes nothing for granted and always makes the best of every opportunity they are given. I would like to see them succeed and make sure that their hard work pays off.

As legislators you have the ability to make sure that all Oregonians are granted equal access to opportunities that will benefit people individually and the state. This will help strengthen tomorrows workforce where these occupations are always in demand. Please vote Yes on SB 854 so that professional licenses are accessible to undocumented Oregonians so that they may reach their full potential so they can continue to contribute to their communities.

Thank you for your time and commitment to serve Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Lizbeht Marquez