

Good afternoon members of the Oregon Legislature and Sponsors of the House Bill 4099;

I want to thank you for this tremendous opportunity to have my voice heard here today. My name is McGraig Takeshi. I am from the Republic of Palau. I am a Senior at Eastern Oregon University studying Information Technology management minoring in computer science and communication.

My testimony today is regarding HB 4009, a tuition equity that will grant in-state rate to COFA students in Oregon. In pursuit of higher education, I enrolled at the Eastern Oregon University. I work full-time while balancing being a full-time student. Since moving here, I have been working, going to school, I pay taxes and contribute to the American economy not unlike a U.S citizen would. This bill is a step closer to provide equal and affordable education for other students like me.

Students under the COFA contract can pursue careers and/or education in the United States as resident aliens. But with this amazing privilege, comes a lot of hard work. We must work twice as hard, sometimes more, to afford any standard requirement for students who are otherwise eligible for resident rate education costs. We are not offered or eligible for many scholarships, and/or grants because of our status. Therefore, we must work harder and sometimes, longer, to be able to pursue the same level of education as our non-COFA peers.

Many other students who are not under COFA struggle with the cost of education, but they have more options, financially, to cover these costs. This bill will allow more students to be able to achieve any level of education they aspire to. For those who dream big but have limited resources. For those who leave home and fly thousands of miles to have a fruitful future. For those who aspire to be more but are held back because of lack of financial capabilities. There are so many of us who end up staying and pursue careers here and contribute to the economy.

While I am about to finish a chapter in my education, I feel that this will open the doors for so many like me who seek a better and brighter future. I am grateful for the opportunities that moving here in search of higher education has provided me. With the approval of this bill, so many more can thrive and strive for much more without the added stress of not being able to afford it. They will not have to drop out because they could not pay their tuition, but instead focus of their grades and their future career goals.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude for the chance to speak out for us. We are like every other student who roams these halls. We sacrifice so much to be able to have stable careers and lives. We come here contributing the same way every other student does. We work just as much and just as hard as they do. We are asking and hoping for an equal opportunity to afford and pursue higher education. Equal rate education is a door we can knock down so that we can all prosper, so that we can all grow. I thank your time and ask that you submit.