



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 3, 2021

To: [House Committee on Education](#)
Chair, Representative Teresa Alonso Leon
Vice-Chair, Representative Courtney Neron
Vice-Chair, Representative Suzanne Weber

Re: [HB 2590](#) – Task Force Underrepresented Students, Student Success in Higher Education – **Support**

LWV supports increased educational opportunity through programs for disadvantaged groups. The LWVOR Education Coordinator and other LWVOR members have followed Education from Early Learning to the Youth Development Division (YDD) over many years, in other words pregnancy/birth to 24 years of age and higher education at colleges and universities. LWVOR followed the regional meetings and actively supported the passage of the 2019 Student Success Act and accompanying CAT funding source impacting Early Learning and PK-12.

Note that as originally written this bill addresses **underrepresented higher education students** rather than all college and university students. [HB 2590](#) would create a bipartisan bicameral 8-member task force of legislators that visit public post-secondary institutions of education in Oregon for the purpose of meeting with students from populations that are underrepresented in the student bodies of these institutions, including students who: **qualify as an underrepresented person; qualify as diverse; are from rural communities in Oregon; are from low-income families; and/or have physical disabilities or learning disabilities.** Resulting 2023 policy bills would focus on access, including student admissions, placement and funding; retention, including student support, student services, increased diversity of faculty, housing needs, food insecurity, child care costs, health care costs, mental health care access and counseling; graduation, including graduation timelines, career counseling, career planning and the level of debt incurred by students; and entry into the workforce, including internships, job and career placement, the correlation between degrees received and jobs entered into and the correlation between the amount a student pays for a degree and the salary received by the student upon graduation.

Since a picture is worth 1,000 words, we call attention to these two graphics from the Higher Education Coordinating Committee (HECC) for the most recent complete year prior to Covid restrictions 2018-2019 published July 2020. The [Community Colleges Snapshot](#) and the [University Snapshot](#) both show that BIPOC and Latinx students have lower rates of completion than white students. Graduation rates among all students have been slowly increasing over time. However, the gap between students of color and their white classmates continues to be significant.

Testimony on [HB 2835](#) this session that would provide a benefits navigator to assist higher education students in determining eligibility and applying for federal, state and local benefits programs offers some additional information about higher education students. Data shows 43% of Oregon higher education students experience [food insecurity](#); 20% of those experiencing food insecurity also experience housing insecurity. [Oregon data](#) finds that students who are parents have higher rates of food insecurity (50%) and housing insecurity (65%) than their peers without children (39% and 49% respectively). [National data](#) finds that student parents are disproportionately BIPOC, women and first-generation college students.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President

Chris Vogel
LWVOR Education Coordinator