

Hello Chair Alonso Leon and members of the committee,

My name is Nat Young. As a student at Oregon State University, I am asking you to vote yes on the Student Voice Bill-- HB 2590.

At my post-secondary institution I have received push-back from all levels of the university when I have asked for common sense changes to accommodate students of colour. Following my request for an Anti-Racist action plan from my department, I received a letter from the dean of my college saying that I was unprofessional. I was stone-walled by the head of my department for my persistence in demanding the anti-racist action plan. I have been yelled at by my advisor until I cried for making other members of my department uncomfortable with my demands. I have been called a conspiracy theorist by the head of the Faculty Senate for attending open sessions with the Chief of Police in which I heavily questioned my safety with an armed contingent on campus. By the same head of the Faculty Senate I was accused of racism for failing to include him in an email after he called me a conspiracy theorist. I have received death threats from fellow students, I was told by a fellow student that I shouldn't have the right to vote, and repeatedly called derogatory names when expressing my need for better resources for students of colour and reallocation of resources from an armed police force. Attending post-secondary school in Oregon is the worst decision I have ever made and I will caution any Black student that I can get to listen against making the same mistake.

Despite claims that underrepresented minorities will be prioritized when allocating financial resources (from my department, my college, and my university), no such funding has been available to me, an international student and graduate student. Financial aid is much more important than the access to higher education: universities need to stop recruiting students of colour to institutions where they fail to make space for students of colour, fail to provide them with resources, and fail to listen to their needs or create a community of solidarity with black voices.

My school, Oregon State University, currently employs armed officers for these and other tasks, and they regularly follow students of colour at night. On my ideal campus, officers armed with lethal weapons would not be involved in mental health checks, welfare checks, or any regular interactions with students. My school currently does not have any mental health care worker that is able to identify with my demographic. I asked for a female, black counsellor, with either experience with LGBTQIA+ community members or self-identified as on the LGTQIA+ spectrum. I received a white-passing male who was apparently their only diversity hire in recent memory. OSU Students need for there to be more than 2 advocates at the Sexual Assault Resource Center (only ONE full time advocate currently), and there to be advocates to address the needs of underrepresented students specifically. We need OSU's Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA) to be appropriately trained on Betrayal Trauma theory, specifically, Institutional Betrayal. The EOA at my school has been complicit in institutional betrayal and retaliation. There needs to be a full audit of the past 10 years of all EOA's Title IX cases, specifically, retention rates, and instances of switching of degrees or departments, labs, majors, etc, for people who have engaged or are engaging with EOA.

As you can see, I am just one student with my own unique perspective on how underrepresented students can better be served. Imagine how many other students are out there. I want to make sure the legislature hears our voices so that we can work together to imagine a better education system for Oregon Students. Please vote yes on HB 2590.

Sincerely,

Nat Young