



To: House Committee on Education
From: Chris Baker, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
RE: Testimony in support of HB2590
Date: March 4, 2021

Chair Alonso León, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the committee,

Hunger-Free Oregon strongly supports HB 2590 which would create a Legislative Committee that would look at ways to ensure that BIPOC students in postsecondary education institutions are graduating successfully.

Hunger-Free Oregon has been invested in highlighting food and basic needs insecurities on Oregon's public colleges and universities for the past three years. In 2020, we conducted a series of listening circles and shared an online survey that reached students across the state. We asked students to share about their experiences in navigating food and basic needs insecurities while attending college. Through this work we have a clear understanding of food and basic needs insecurities among Oregon's college students. For example, we know that pre-COVID, data reflected that 41% of college students had experienced food insecurity¹, with BIPOC students experiencing hunger at a rate nearly double than that of white students.

While there is [national data](#)² that breaks down the number of college students who are food and housing insecure by demographic, Oregon does not currently have any comprehensive data that paints a clear picture of what the BIPOC student experience is like across all of Oregon's public colleges and universities. We have data from the [2019 Hope Labs Report](#)³ that is based on surveys from 14 out of Oregon's 17 community colleges, [PSU's recent Housing Report](#)⁴, Hunger-Free Oregon's [report on Food Insecurity Among Oregon's College Students](#)⁵, and there is a preliminary Food Insecurity Survey

¹ Hope Center, *2019 Oregon Community College #RealCollege Survey*. Updated April 2020. https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019_OregonCC_Report_v2.pdf

² Goldrick-Rab, S., Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., & Williams, T. (2019, April). *College and University Basic Needs Insecurity: A National #RealCollege Survey Report*. Retrieved from https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/HOPE_realcollege_National_report_digital.pdf

³ Oregon Community Colleges #RealCollege Survey. (2020, April). Retrieved from https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019_OregonCC_Report_v2.pdf

⁴ Townley, G., Stewart, K., Greene, J., & Petteni, M. (2020, September). *Housing and Food Insecurity at Portland State University*. Retrieved from https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/sites/g/files/znlhnr1791/files/2020-09/PSU%20Housing%20%26%20Food%20Insecurity_Final%20Report.pdf

⁵ Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon, *College Student Food Insecurity in Oregon: Listening Circle and Survey Thematic Analysis*, 2020. https://oregonhunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/College-Student-Food-Insecurity-in-Oregon_-Listening-Circle-and-Survey-Thematic-Analysis-1.pdf

Report from OSU Corvallis. All of these point to greater disparities among Oregon's BIPOC students.

This quote by Hunger-Free Oregon's Community Food Justice Organizer, Venus Barnes, during a recent [interview](#) with the Willamette Week⁶ captures the importance and urgency best:

"By leaving BIPOC students behind, Oregon is losing talent, losing innovation, losing money. If we look at this from a financial point of view, integration and diversity only enhances and advances and excels a culture. It's a tragic event that we just willfully sit by and allow students to fall through the cracks and then not create policies to help. Society cannot go anywhere without us. And if society does, it's at a fraction of movement compared to a thriving, diverse culture."

Having a Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education to develop student success policy proposals would direct much needed attention towards addressing these inequities. We urge you to support HB2590.

Chris Baker, Legislative Strategist, Hunger-Free Oregon
chris@oregonhunger.org

For more information about our Hunger-Free Campuses work:
<https://oregonhunger.org/hunger-free-campuses/>

⁶ Jensen, L. (2021, January 27). Some portlanders must choose between a degree and a meal. Retrieved February 08, 2021, from https://www.wweek.com/news/schools/2021/01/27/some-portlanders-must-choose-between-a-degree-and-a-meal/?fbclid=IwAR16QrgYTCoo1T_d4pOeu5tV_RUFRcpqbOd-xUfVIVG6FG0gcLzibCtZGtA