

Regarding HB 2590

Written Testimony

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House Committee on Education

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Chair and Committee Members,

Food insecurity among college students is not evenly distributed. It is a form of material hardship that occurs more often among college students of color, many of whom are first generation college students. All existing research about college student food insecurity affirms this pattern.

In a recent survey of Oregon State University student in Corvallis, we found that around 5,000 students experienced food insecurity in Fall term. Our report remains preliminary as we further evaluate the data, and while we collect data from our online students and our campus in Bend. But these early data show a food insecurity rate of around 20% for white students, while it is about 10 percentage points higher for specific groups such as Black, Latinx, Native American and Pacific Islander students. Most of this difference seems to be accounted for by first-generation student status, meaning that while the university system has enrolled students of color, many of whom are first-generation college students, we have not yet fully addressed some of the inequities they experience on campus and before campus. They are experiencing the hardships that come from attending school with less of a financial safety net than other students.

The negative impact of food insecurity on student success is also well-established in the research literature. Academic performance and physical and mental health are negatively impacted, while stigma and experiences of marginalization are increased. Any effort to monitor and secure college student success should take seriously material hardships that Black, Latinx, Native American, and Pacific Islander students endure. A taskforce focused on documenting and addressing these issues would undoubtedly attend to these sorts of issues.