

Hello Chair Alonso Leon, Co-chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the committee.

For the record my name is Makana Waikiki, I am a student at Western Oregon University and a member of ASWOU as well as Oregon Student Association.

I am here to express support for HB 2093 with the amendments being discussed, which expands eligibility for the Oregon Promise program.

Financial Aid access is a top priority for OSA this year. I know that were this hearing not being held during spring break, you would see a lot more students testifying on behalf of it than you are seeing today. Students are struggling with food and housing insecurity at alarming rates, struggling to find work due to the pandemic, and dropping out in the middle of the year due to financial struggles.

As chair of the incidental fee committee at WOU, I know that WOU students are barely able to pay tuition. I have heard stories of students sleeping in their cars and having to choose between tuition and rent. This is not sustainable and something needs to be done. If we do not do everything we can to expand financial aid access for students, Oregon will miss out on a generations worth of higher wages for taxpayers because many of us will not be able to finish our degrees.

While more work is needed beyond this bill in order to ensure low income students can access postsecondary education in Oregon, passing this bill is a critical action that the legislature can take. By expanding the applicability of the Oregon Promise Program to students seeking 4-year degrees, we are helping students chart their course through postsecondary education in a way that best suits their needs.

Thank you for your consideration.