

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bobby Crisler. I am a single dad with a teenager daughter. I was enrolled in the Honor's College at Portland State University before having to take a break from school due to COVID-19. I am writing today in support of SB 564.

Currently, Oregon lacks comprehensive data to indicate the number of college students that are also parents. This lack of data creates a significant barrier to making appropriate determinations about the specific educational needs and outcomes of student parents.

Identifying this key demographic information will allow institutions to best determine the proper allocation of resources that seek to increase access to higher education for student parents and support them in the completion of their degrees.

This matters to me because I'm a dad and a student. My daughter's mom and I have joint/shared custody, but her mom claims her on her taxes, so even when I complete the FAFSA there is no place to indicate that I'm a dad. My school knows a lot of things about me: that I'm an older student, that I'm male, my sexual orientation, my income level, even that I'm the first person in my family to attend college. But my most central identity—being a dad—they have never even asked me about. Being a dad is also part of the responsibilities that made it hard to stay in school after the pandemic started. A lot of parents had to take a break from school due to the impacts of COVID, but until we are counted there is no way for us to be seen.

All students deserve to have the programs they need in order to succeed academically and Senate Bill 564 is the first step towards making this possible.

I believe that requiring public post-secondary institutions to identify whether a student is a parent, acting as a parent, or a guardian is an essential and desperately needed tool in the fight to lower the educational barriers for parenting students and close the achievement gap. As my story shows, FAFSA data is not enough.

This is why I urge you to support SB 564.

Let student parents be counted.

Let us be seen.

Let our stories resonate through this hearing room, because they deserve to be heard.

Thank you to Senator Gelser for championing this bill and to Chair Dembrow for sponsoring it. Thank you to the committee for this opportunity to submit my testimony in support of SB 564,

Bobby R. Crisler
Portland, Oregon