

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ashley Jackson and I am the parent of 3 children, two of which I was single parenting while I attended Lane Community College and the University of Oregon and I am writing today in support of SB 564.

For too long, our state has lacked data to properly assess the number of college students that are also parents. This lack of data means that our legislature makes decisions about the specific educational needs and outcomes of students without the critical information that truly determines the ability to address generational poverty.

As a student parent, I met barriers to success that were simply planning oversites by the college and state institutions and the financial aid systems. The cost of childcare, the program/class schedules, certain deadlines and the structure of engaging governance all excluded me and my kids during critical times that ultimately added years and thousands of dollars to my education. As a Ford Family Opportunity Scholar, I was swiftly lifted out of this industrial complex with a scholarship that acknowledged my unique circumstances as a student parent. I was able to engage with my community, reach out for support and have advice tailored for the obstacles that my family faced. I remember advocating for HB2015 and going to extreme lengths to make sure that I supported that bill which ultimately passed because of the dissonance I experienced personally between the DHS system and the college system which was yet another obstacle, where it could have been part of the alliance in helping students who are already doing the heavy lifting of interrupting generational poverty through obtaining higher education. During these unprecedented times, this data regarding student parents is even more important to making critical decisions for the future of families in Oregon. Senate Bill 564 is the first step towards making this possible and is hopefully the first of many that recognizes the unique experiences of student parents in higher education.

IF we are to address poverty in a meaningful way, start by recognizing those people who are already pursuing solutions to elevate their earning potential and ultimate end reliance on welfare. We need to know exactly how many people are caring for children and address those problems they face in a data driven way. This data will allow many systems that aim to help be even more efficient in this pursuit.

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 and if I can offer any more information about my personal experience, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Ashley Jackson

B.S in Spatial Data Science and Technology
University of Oregon
Ford Foundation Scholar Class of 2015