

I strongly support SB 564. This legislation would require the collection of data on college students who are also parenting, information current missing from our understanding of today's student population. As a research professor, with decades of teaching in higher education, I can state unequivocally that knowledge about students' status and circumstances is essential in facilitating their success. Along with other demographic information already being collected, knowing the percent of student parents on campus would be valuable for administrations and faculty. Furthermore, as an academic who has studied and published on low-income family social mobility, the availability of such data would be an important contribution to statewide poverty-reduction efforts. Beyond my scholarly knowledge, as a former advisor to many college students, I learned how invisible and marginalized student parents can feel on campus. While other college students are juggling individual concerns as they matriculate, student parents face complex demands on their time and attention that continue to remain invisible. By including parenting as an important variable of student identity, institutional recognition would follow. That recognition is critical. Just as academic institutions now incorporate an understanding of other marginalized groups, toward making higher education accessible to all, including parents who are often working their way out of poverty, is equally essential. The first step toward this goal is having reliable data regarding how many of our students are also parents, where they are enrolled in school, the years to degree, and their graduation rates. I write in support of collecting these data through the mandate established by SB 564. Lisa Dodson, Research Professor of Sociology, Boston College and Cochair of the Oregon Chapter of Scholars Strategy Network.