

Submitter: Sarah Larson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB572

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for receiving my written testimony. My name is Sarah Larson and my son, William Larson, was a graduate of the first class of CCS in 2020 at Portland State University. This program was invaluable for Will. It provided an opportunity that was not otherwise accessible to him as an individual with an intellectual disability. CCS not only exposed him to college/university from an academic standpoint, it provided him with valuable, trusted, and caring relationships with mentors, teachers, and CCS staff. In other words, it provided an academic and college experience that he and all other individuals with disabilities deserve to share alongside their typically developed peers. It challenged him, sometimes frustrated him, and at times allowed him to bask in the success of a completed project or group interaction. Just like every other college student experiences. Another valuable part of CCS is the supported work program which allowed Will the life experience and responsibility of working while attending classes. The CCS program is designed to encourage growth, independence, and success at all levels.

The dedication and incredible support of the CCS staff, PSU staff, and PSU students helped facilitate a lifelong sense of confidence and accomplishment. It reinforced a sense of belonging. He bonded with teachers, classmates, and mentors. It expanded his social network by joining the Unified Sports program at PSU. Post CCS, he still initiates contact and keeps in touch with some of the teachers and mentors and the reason is because they genuinely made a difference in his life. Like other adults who look back at the bond created with their college mates, Will now has the opportunity do to so as well.

Currently, Will works at Portland Public Schools in Nutrition Services which keeps him connected with the education system and in contact with teachers and students, a community that he learned the value of in large part because of his participation in CCS.

Hearing that there is potential to expand into community colleges with SB572 gives me hope for the future. An option for an identifiable track to further education after high school should be an option for everyone. Helping to educate and prepare all people for success stories yet to be unlocked is an opportunity no one should be denied.

Respectfully,

Sarah Larson