



Mission: Empower Oregon families experiencing disability in their pursuit of a whole life by expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping families.

March 14, 2023

Chair Dembrow

Vice-Chair Weber

Members of the Senate Committee on Education

RE: Support of SB 572 – Inclusive Postsecondary Education for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities.

FACT Oregon is a family-led nonprofit that works toward a future where communities are accessible, inclusive, and empower the self-determination of people with disabilities. We support families, youth with disabilities, and partners to hold high expectations, navigate special education and disability systems and advocate for the supports needed to thrive at home, in school, and in community. **Since 2012, we have served as the state and federally designated Parent Training and Information Center [PTI] for special education as well as a Family Network serving nearly 7,000 families of youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities [I/DD] in Multnomah and Washington counties.**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] ensures that students with disabilities have available a Free Appropriate Public Education [FAPE] that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet the student's unique needs and **prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.**

Yet today the only comprehensive AND inclusive post-secondary education opportunity for students with I/DD comes for Portland State University's Career and Community Studies Program [CCS], developed in 2016. Rooted in ableism, the continued misconception that students with I/DD cannot achieve success in higher education leads many to programs that lead to poor outcomes.

The CCS program provides academic coursework that is fully included at PSU, including academic coaching and an individualized learning plan, career development and employment leading to a full, self-directed life. The high post-program success of 81% of students gaining employment demonstrates the need of the program and why it needs to expand to other areas of the state.

FACT Oregon supports SB 572 to sustain PSU's CCS program and expand inclusive college options to community colleges across the state. These programs begin to dismantle the ableist myths around higher education for individuals with I/DD and promotes that with high expectations and support these students can thrive.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Christy Reese, Executive Director

FACT Oregon