

Submitter: Megan Van Pelt

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education

Measure: HB3565

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruiz, Vice Chair McIntire, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Megan Van Pelt, I am a student at University of Oregon and enrolled tribal member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and I am here today to speak in support of HB 3565 and the Oregon Tribal Student Grant.

I grew up in Northeastern Oregon, where I began my higher education journey at Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) due to its affordability.

After transferring to the University of Oregon, I switched my major to Native American & Indigenous Studies (NAIS) with the hope of working for my tribe's cultural anthropology or at its culture institute. My aim in pursuing higher education is to preserve history and traditional knowledge. As a rising senior at the University of Oregon, I am proud to be part of the first graduating cohort of the NAIS degree.

Recently, I was fortunate enough to receive the Oregon Tribal Student Grant, which has allowed me to focus on my studies without the added stress of financial hardship. In my first year at the University of Oregon, money was a significant source of stress, and it consumed my thoughts, distracting me from my studies. The grant has made an enormous difference, and I believe it can do the same for other students with tribal affiliations in the state of Oregon.

As someone who has experienced the challenges of higher education firsthand, I urge you to approve the Oregon Tribal Student Grant. It will help bridge the gap in educational disparities and provide students like myself with the opportunity to have a normal college experience. With your support, we can strive towards a future where every student has the means to achieve their full potential.

Thank you for your time, and we hope that students can count on your support of HB 3565.