

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruiz, Vice Chair McIntire, and members of the House Higher Education Committee, my name is Tiera Garrety, I am a student at the University of Oregon, and I am here today to speak in support of HB 3565 and the Oregon Tribal Student Grant.

I am an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation located in Oakville, Washington. I come from a long line of storytellers and basketweavers. While my family leads a traditional lifestyle, we are not blind to the effects of the ongoing process of colonization nor to the way our society functions as a result of such.

At the age of eight, my *Matsa* (great-grandmother) was taken from our reservation and enrolled in the Chemawa Indian School. During her time in the residential school system, she quickly learned that if she- or any of her descendants- were to be successful in this world, they would have to adhere to Western societal norms and receive a Euro-centric education that was compliant with colonialistic standards. From here, the belief in the necessity of education was passed down. My grandparents would go to the next town to provide my mother with better schooling than what was offered on the reservation. My mother made her own sacrifices to ensure that I would receive a better education than she did. Each generation of our family fights for the right to receive a fair education, and to fund such.

This same ideology has bled into the values of our own Tribe. In recent years a scholarship program was created, paying the cost of in-state tuition for any Tribal member pursuing a post-secondary degree. Because of this, I can focus on my education and not have to worry about how I'll pay for my tuition. However, I have watched too many of my fellow Native peers struggle with their tuition costs to the point of either transferring or dropping out completely.

In all honesty, it breaks my heart. There is nothing more gut-wrenching than seeing the monster of colonization still feeding on the hopes and dreams of us, of our ancestors, and of our future children. With all of these factors working against us- without the proper education- how are we supposed to go back to our communities and work to create a better future for the next seven generations?

In truth, the United States government has historically fought against the success of Indigenous peoples through assimilation tactics such as the reservation system. Reservations were created to keep us on them, and they are still successful to a degree. The historic secludedness of reservations and the resulting lack of job opportunities ultimately created financial and social disparities, making it extremely difficult for those who tried to leave. Today, this manifests itself by affecting Native student's ability to fund their post-secondary education. The financial disparities that Native students face are undoubtedly a direct result of colonization. They are proof that colonization is ongoing.

To not support HB 3565 is to be compliant in past and present colonialistic tactics. It is to fail past, present, and future generations of Native students. Future generations should not have to worry about receiving equal access to education because the government has a historic record of failing Native peoples. We should not have to fight for an education others take for granted. The Oregon Tribal Student Grant fosters the futures of our Tribes, our cultures, and our peoples. The advancement, sovereignty, and preservation of our communities depends on HB 3565.

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