

February 8, 2024

Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Diehl, Vice Chair Nguyen, and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business

Re: House Bill 4041, Support

Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Diehl, Vice Chair Nguyen, and Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Savana Semallie, I'm an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and half American Samoan. I'm in my final year at Portland State University studying Community Development and the funds from the Economic Equity Investment Program (EEIP) scholarship couldn't have come at a better time.

I come from a single parent household with younger siblings, and I'm not able to receive any financial support from my parents. My education is paramount, so I made strides in saving for my education by opening an Individual Development Account (IDA) savings account when I was 18 years old. However, the amount that I have saved to use for my education still leaves me with a bill at the end of each quarter. I try to support myself, my family, and my education by working part time at Portland State University in the Native American Student and Community Center and my internship with the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), but the money that I earn often goes towards immediate expenses like food and housing. While I have managed to balance this over the last few years, it became apparent that despite my savings, Pell Grant, and current scholarships, I might not be able to graduate since I didn't have enough funds to get through my final quarter. Funding from the EEIP for this scholarship ensures that I won't have to delay my graduation.

I'm looking forward to graduating on time this spring and pursuing a career in Human Resources or Community Development. I hope to give back to the Native community, because without their support, I likely would not be as far as I am in my education. I'm thankful to the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) for my amazing academic coach who also got me connected to so many other people and resources like this one.

Ahéhee' (thank you),

Savana Semallie