

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf, and members of the committee. For the record, I am Maria Gomez and while I currently serve as Senator Sollman's legislative aide, and while the Senator does plan on submitting written testimony in support of this bill, I am here today on my own behalf to testify in support of House Bill 4131 and to share more about my experience as an IDA saver.

I am the *proud* daughter of immigrants, a first-generation Oregonian, and a first-generation college graduate. Had it not been for Adelante Mujeres, and their Chica's Development Program, I would not be sitting before you today as the first women in my family to obtain her bachelor's degree.

I knew I wanted to attend George Fox University (located in Newberg), by the time I was in the 8th grade. As someone who was raised in a religious household, it was important for me to attend a university where I could gain a post-secondary education while continuing to grow in my faith. This was always my goal, but by the time I was in high school it felt more like a dream.

Navigating higher education as a first-generation college student is scary and overwhelming. By the time I was in high school, I didn't have a single penny saved up for college. I had no idea what the college application process looked like, let alone how financial aid worked or what a savings account even was. This, of course, all changed as soon my family and I opened an IDA account through Adelante Mujeres Chica's Program. It was because of them that my parents and I gained financial literacy and were able to better prepare for college. As an IDA saver, we were required to attend workshops where we learned how to manage our money, how to budget, save, and make informed financial decisions. By the time I was set to graduate high school, my parents had saved up \$3,000. This may not sound like a lot, but for a family that was barely making ends meet, it was a great accomplishment. Because of the 3:1 match the program offered, we had a total of \$12,000 saved up for college which went towards my school supplies, textbooks, and tuition. From my understanding, the program now

offers a 5:1 match. The amount I had saved up went a long way for my parents and I so I can't even image what a 5:1 match will do for others.

IDA's allow Oregonians, like me, to build financial stability and assets. I truly believe this tool can help people and communities break through boundaries and lead successful lives ... and I say that as a testament to my own lived experience. I don't believe I would be where I am today had it not been for Adelante Mujeres and the IDA program. I respectfully urge your support. Thank you.