



Student Housing and Childcare Taskforce

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruiz, Vice Chair McIntire, and members of the committee,

My name is Nick Keough; I am the Legislative Director of the Oregon Student Association. **I am writing you all today to ask for your support on HB 2263, which would create two legislative taskforces. One investigating best ways to increase student housing availability, accessibility and affordability; and the other investigating best ways to increase access to affordable, and quality child care for students.**

This bill is a direct result of the Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education, and aligns with the task force's final report and recommendations. As you all know, one of the most impactful parts of the JTUSHE process was the site visits where legislators came directly to our campuses to meet face-to-face with underrepresented students. During these visits, the task force members held roundtable discussions, small-group conversations, and formal public meetings to learn about the barriers to student success faced by students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, low-income students, student parents, student veterans, rural students, and beyond.

While each of these student populations face unique and different barriers, struggling with college affordability was a common thread throughout. Outside of tuition, underrepresented students struggled immensely with affording quality housing and quality childcare. In the process of trying to complete their degrees, students are living on the edge financially. According to the state economist, more than 50% of Oregon renters do not have enough money left over for food, medicine, and basic necessities.

We know all too well that eviction, displacement, and homelessness are particularly difficult for young people and students. Oregon has one of the highest student homelessness rates in the country. According to a 2019 Hope Center #RealCollege survey in 2019, 52% of Oregon's community college students were housing insecure in the previous year and 20% of respondents were homeless. These students' circumstances put them at an incredible disadvantage through no fault of their own. Students are unable to adequately study, adequately learn, and wholly engage in their education.

Access to affordable childcare on college campuses is linked to improved persistence and completion among college students with children. Despite the potential for campus childcare to play a critical role in student parents' ability to enroll in and complete college degrees, there are numerous barriers to accessing affordable **AND** quality childcare for students across the state. For instance, the low rates of slot turnover and the uneven processes of assigning open slots to families from a wait list.

It is for these reasons that the Oregon Student Association strongly supports HB 2263. We have many questions about student housing and childcare, and very little answers. A taskforce on student housing and student childcare will allow us to take a dedicated look into each issue in consultation with experts and students. From there, we will be better positioned to develop specific and actionable solutions.

Thank you,

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Legislative Director, Oregon Student Association