



April 11, 2019

Dear Committee Chair and Members,

Hello, my name is Zane Downs. I'm an alum of the Catalyst Transgender Leadership Program and, on behalf of Basic Rights Oregon, I respectfully request your support for the Student Success Act to invest in Oregon's schools by providing resources to school districts for wraparound services and staff, mental health and behavioral health supports, and greater resources to help Oregon's students thrive.

Basic Rights Oregon works to ensure that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Oregonians experience equality with a focus on transgender and racial justice. We're also particularly focused on the needs of LGBTQ youth and that's why we're here today in support of the Student Success Act.

I personally have a stake in this bill, as someone who grew up in the McMinnville school district and experienced firsthand what it's like to come out as transgender in high school. I believe my school did an excellent job supporting my chosen name, pronouns, and bathroom usage, however with a student body of over 2,000, they simply were not able to provide the level of individual support that LGBTQ students often need. During my senior year in 2016, I suffered severely from depression and anxiety related to my feelings of isolation as a trans person. I skipped my classes more and more frequently, because I was so afraid of being misgendered and humiliated. I often envisioned a future in which all LGBTQ students would feel safe coming to school, and the Student Success Act is a step towards that future.

Basic Rights Oregon understands that schools alone cannot address the total scope of the unmet social, emotional and mental health needs of students. But by providing mental and behavioral health supports, more school health professionals, trauma-informed practices, supports for students with disabilities, and wraparound family supports, we can ensure that we are investing in all students and their futures.

We also recognize the importance of other legislative efforts like SB 52, Adi's Act, which will provide a model suicide prevention policy and plan for all school districts in Oregon and addresses populations at higher risk for youth suicide, including LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities, and foster youth. Adi's Act, in conjunction with the Student Success Act, will ensure that students like me are given the support they need to see a future for themselves in Oregon.

The Joint Committee on Student Success has invested time in the community and heard from students, educators, business leaders and other stakeholders which shows that this is what Oregon schools need to succeed. We are very heartened that the

legislature is taking up these issues now because we don't have time to wait. We encourage you to pass the Student Success Act and invest in the future of Oregon.

Thank you for your time.

Zane Downs

Catalyst alum, Basic Rights Oregon