

April 26, 2021

Senate Committee on Education
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education Committee,

College students experience hunger, homelessness, food, and housing insecurity at alarming rates. As many as 1 in 3 students at four-year institutions experienced food insecurity, according to a national study conducted by the Hope Center of Temple University. In Oregon, we see the severity of this issue play out every day for students on our seven campuses. Basic needs insecurity among our student bodies is a well-documented, widespread, and pressing crisis.

There are significant adverse impacts when students cannot meet their basic needs. These include reduced academic achievement, worsened health outcomes, and threatened economic mobility. The circumstances of basic needs insecurity can be the very reason a student is seeking a degree, while ironically preventing a student from succeeding and completing a degree. We also know that these circumstances are not distributed equally. BIPOC and low-income students are disproportionately more likely to be impacted by these issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this crisis. Students have lost jobs, income, and childcare, struggling to make ends meet while pursuing higher education in new, remote formats. We have been working around-the-clock to care for students and connect them to the local, state, and federal resources they are eligible for, including SNAP and multiple federal stimulus programs. But it is simply not enough. Support for hands-on advising and student care is one of the critical needs we have at this time.

We have worked with a variety of stakeholders, including the Oregon Student Association and members of this committee, to develop House Bill 2835, and its Senate companion bill, Senate Bill 849. This bill would fund Basic Needs Navigators on every public university and community college campus in Oregon and create a consortium to develop best practices and cross-sector coordination.

We see this as an essential, direct, and impactful investment the state needs to make for our most vulnerable students.

As the Presidents of Oregon's public universities, we ask that you support Oregon Senate Bill 849 and House Bill 2835 and \$5.2 million in General Fund to support positions at all 24 public university and community college campuses.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Insko
President
Eastern Oregon University



Linda Schott
President
Southern Oregon University



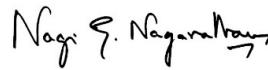
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