



To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
From: Oregon Education Association
Date: April 3, 2013
RE: Community College Support Fund

Oregon's community colleges – their faculty and staff – serve as our state's economic first-responders. Hundreds of thousands of Oregonians are enrolled at 17 community colleges around the state. By providing professional training and serving as an affordable bridge to a 4-year degree, Oregon's community college system is a driver of business development and job creation needed to get Oregon's economy moving again.

OEA believes community colleges and the Legislature remain committed to the original charges given by the Legislature when Oregon's system of community colleges was created. Since the recession began, however, state funding for community colleges has dropped from \$500 million to \$395.5 million. At the same time, statewide enrollment grew almost 34 percent and student and community demand for expansion of lower-division offerings, extension of retraining opportunities for displaced workers, and the need for full-time faculty to provide the one-on-one support students need, have expanded their original mission.

As full-time faculty, part-time faculty and staff who work with Oregon students everyday, the Oregon Education Association, with the full involvement of the Community College Council, wholly support Oregon's community colleges. Central to that support is advocating for upholding statutes that represent the core of the mission of community colleges. As one example, Oregon Revised Statutes 341.009(17), states, *"The cost of education to the individual should be sufficiently low to permit students of low-income families to attend. This is particularly true of tuition costs."*

An affordable path to all 17 community colleges coupled with access to highly qualified, full-time faculty members and staff is always in the best interest of students and our State. Adequate investment in Oregon's community colleges means Oregonians will have the skills, training and education needed to positively contribute to our local economies and communities.

We respectfully ask that the state invest \$510 million in the Community College Support Fund in the 2013-2015 biennium. With this level of investment Oregon can get back on track to meeting the goals outlined in statute, and most importantly, provide a quality, accessible and affordable education to students and their families.