

Testimony of David Rives President, American Federation of Teachers-Oregon

Hello, my name is David Rives, and as well as being the President of the American Federation of Teachers in Oregon, I am also an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher at Portland Community College.

Let me begin by telling you a little about the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon. We represent 15,000 members across the state. Our members live in every legislative district in Oregon and work in the private and public sectors in elementary and high schools, child care centers, community colleges and four-year colleges and institutions, to health care clinics and hospitals. AFT members work as classified employees, faculty, instructors, graduate teachers, early educators and in health care professions. AFT-Oregon represents members at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, Oregon State University, Western Oregon University, and Eastern Oregon University. Nationally, of AFT's 1.5 million members, nearly 200,000 are higher education faculty, professional staff and graduate employees—more than any other national organization.

AFT-Oregon believes that Tuition Equity is the right thing to do for the youth of Oregon. We must expand educational opportunities to our youth who have grown up in Oregon and attended Oregon's Public Schools. Without Tuition Equity these students would be forced to pay out-of-state tuition at a rate three times higher than that of other Oregonians.

I teach a wide diversity of students in English for Speakers of Other Languages, they speak different first languages, are different ages, come from different backgrounds, and have different goals for using their English skills. These students share a strong drive to learn English and do better for both themselves and their families. Whenever a student tells me how they'd like to pursue a four-year degree, I am there to advise them on how to develop the necessary language and academic skills and to apply to a university. Sometimes I'll hear from a student that they can't apply to a university due to the high cost of out-of-state tuition and the unavailability of financial aid. I don't pry when the students' express these barriers to higher education, but it becomes apparent when I talk to them that it is because of their residency status. These young people with such high potential face a lifetime of limitations because they could not access higher education. We owe it to the youth of our society to help them reach their full potential.

Tuition Equity is the right thing to do for the future of Oregon.

Thank you.