

To Whom It May Concern:

Today, hundreds of students are here to support the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the state-funded grant program that allows thousands of Oregon students to attend college. While this seems like a great amount of support for college-bound individuals, it most definitely is not. Oregon is the fifth-lowest contributor to college students within the country.

I have six younger siblings, ranging from four to 16 years old. Some of us have different sets of parents, but we are all a family nonetheless. My mother and step-father have been very methodical and responsible with my college fund over the years, and while they won't be able to cover the entire cost of college, I am confident to say that I will be able to attend.

Two of my siblings, Hunter and Cassidy, are not so lucky, however. We share the same father, and unfortunately he did not make the same financial decisions that my mother did, and the economy crash in 2008 didn't help the situation either. Their mother never graduated from high school, and is currently unemployed. Hunter, age seven, is in first grade this year and is already a fantastic football player. Cassidy, age six, is loving her first year of school as a kindergartner. They are just beginning their education career, but already the odds of them being able to attend college are slim to none.

How is it fair that one sibling can attend college when some of the others cannot? It is absolutely unacceptable for such young people to face such great challenges when it comes to being able to attend college. Hunter and Cassidy don't even know what college is yet, but if they want to go, they're going to have to pay for it themselves. It's a vicious cycle for high school students. They seek part-time jobs to save money for tuition, but in return, their grades often slip, thus decreasing their chances of getting accepted to college. But if students just focused on their studies, there is no guaranteeing that someone will be there to help cover the costs if they were to attend college.

I encourage you to support the Oregon Opportunity Grant program to put a break in this cycle. So many children, whether they're high schoolers or pre-schoolers, are deeply challenged by the overwhelming cost of college. Oregon will be better off in the future if we can support our students today.

Thank you for considering supporting this program!

Respectfully,

Taylor Harding
Junior, West Linn High School