

To: Senate Committee on Education

Date: February 24th, 2015

Re: SB 81

Chair Roblan, members of the committee:

The American Federation of Teachers-Oregon represents over 12,000 members across the state of Oregon. Our members work in the private and public sectors in elementary and high schools, child care centers, community colleges and four-year universities.

AFT-Oregon members believe in the promise of affordable access to higher education for all students. Senate Bill 81 is a much-needed move to increase access to Oregon's community colleges. However, the members of AFT-Oregon have serious concerns about a proposal that waives tuition for students while not providing new streams of funding to cover the costs.

The promise of higher education as a public good has been eroded over the years; with stagnant wages and rising student debt, young people and returning adult students are either deterred from going to college or buried under debt if they do choose to attend. That's why increasing accessibility to community college is such a critical piece of strengthening our communities and our workforce.

However, without significant, additional state investment in programs like this, SB 81 will be yet another empty promise from Oregon lawmakers to our students who desperately need the opportunities that access to community colleges and universities will provide.

AFT-Oregon members encourage the committee to show a real commitment to affordable access to higher education by attaching additional streams of funding to cover the costs of SB 81.

Sincerely,



David Rives
AFT-Oregon President