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April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015

To: Ways and Means Joint Subcommittee on Education  
From: Mariana Sofia Paredones  
RE: Funding for Community Colleges

Co-Chair Komp, Co-Chair Monroe, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mariana Sofia Paredones, and I am here today with the Oregon Student Association and a full time student from Lane Community College. I am here to urge you to fix the errors from the current budget proposals for Higher Education.

I started attending Lane Community College last Spring, and I was excited to start. However I can honestly say that I had really hoped I wouldn't go to a community college first, not because there's anything wrong with going to a CC, but because i wanted to go to a university right off the start. Unfortunately, college is very expensive, and coming from Arizona I knew that Out-Of-State Tuition would be even higher. I decided to go to Lane Community College for the AAOT Program, and the residency requirements for in-state tuition were more feasible.

I do not qualify for financial aid, what this means is everything I pay for school is out of pocket. So far this past year at LCC my parents have paid close to \$6,000 for my education. My parents have often felt frustrated and have told me several times how hard it is to pay for my school, bills and trying to sustain a household with four other children. My mother, didn't go to college, she didn't even finish high school. When she was 14 years old, she was forced to drop out due to constant physical abuse from her male peers who would tell her to leave, the institutions that she had access to did not encourage girls to stay in school. Me going to college is one of the biggest achievements my mother has.

I worry about my future all the time, I fear that I won't graduate and will be financially incapable of continuing. I know ten people who have dropped out this term because they were maxed out, half of them go to community college. My best friend Michelle had to choose between paying rent and going to school. \$6,000 has gone into investing into my future. This figure would make sense at a university, but this is Community College. Community Colleges were made with the intent to be accessible and affordable to people wanting to get higher education.

With enrollment rates down, and tuition increases year after year, it's not surprising that this is a direct result of disinvestment to Community Colleges. I urge the Ways and Means Committee to reconsider the errors of not investing into the future of students, and help us get to graduation not more debt

Thank you for your time,

Mariana Sofia Paredones