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April 6th, 2015

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education  
From: Malisa Ratthasing, Lane Community College  
RE: Community College Budget

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

My name is Malisa Ratthasing, I am the student body President at Lane Community College and a member of the board of directors with the Oregon Student Association.

I joined my student government with the intention to better the lives of my peers so that the next generation of students doesn't have to face the same hardships as we do today.

However, in my time in student government, I've heard horror stories of the drastic measures that students take to achieve the dream of attaining a college degree. One in which there is a student who donates plasma regularly to pay for school. My heart goes out to them, I wish I never had to watch those I care about risk their health just to pay for another class; but I also have my own struggles.

I am a first generation Asian American student, if I can get through the next 2 years I'll be the first in my family to graduate from an institution of higher education, and I want to continue on to graduate school. Fortunately I have my mother who wants to help me achieve these goals. I was raised by a single mother, I have lived in 39 states and 33 schools and despite those hardships, and she still found a way to put food on the table. Yet I will never forget the look in my mother's eyes when she told me that she has contemplated suicide because she truly feels that the sacrifice of one person will help the next generation become scholars, like me and her 5 grandchildren.

People are literally giving up our blood, sweat, and families for an investment of an unknown future that's not guaranteed.

Community college is meant to be affordable, to help the neediest in our communities better their lives, yet why is it that those willing to sacrifice the most feel anchored to a lifetime of debt. In my mind, no matter how much money I pay back, no matter how hard I work, no matter how hard I try, it will never erase the guilt of knowing what my mother has contemplated for my education. Since when did the cost of an education, the pursuit of a better life, the American dream, come to mean a constant state of risk, despair, and the contemplation of death? I urge this body to reinvest and fund community colleges at \$560 million. Students, educators, and institutions more broadly care



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about creating a better future, but with a history of decreasing funding this becomes  
ever more only a dream. Please. Do not leave us behind. As of 2013 the combined  
debt of community college students is \$307,262,577<sup>1</sup>

Sincerely,

Malisa Ratthasing

Lane Community College

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2014/09/student\\_loan\\_defaults\\_put\\_oreg.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2014/09/student_loan_defaults_put_oreg.html)