

April 6th, 2015

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education

From: Dustin Treece

RE: Community College Budget

Co-Chairs Monroe and Komp, and members of the committee:

My name is Dustin Treece and I'm here to urge this committee to allocate 560 million dollars to fund community colleges for this biennium. I go to school just down the street at Chemeketa Community College. I'm a student who believes in education, I think it is the single greatest opportunity for someone to better his or her self, standing in life and place in our society. I'm a student who goes to school full time, at times taking up to 23 college credits and working 2 jobs on campus. I'm a Dean's list physics major who dreams of achieving a PHD and teaching at a university or community college some day. All of this has come as a huge surprise to my parents, neither of which have received a college degree. My mom, who is disabled and divorced, has no way to help me pay for college, as we struggled just to stay afloat while I was finishing high school. We made it by on her social security, child support and other support programs like EBT. That was the reason I decided to attend community college, because that's what community colleges are for. To provide higher education to people like me with big dreams and few resources to start chasing them with.

Except now that I'm going to college, I'm finding it's taking more and more resources every year to keep attending. I'm a recipient of the max award for the Pell grant, Stafford loans and this last year I was even one of the lucky few who received the Oregon Opportunity Grant. I'm extremely fortunate to have these programs that cover a large portion of my cost to attend college, however, I still have to struggle to pay for many parts of my education. As much aid as I do receive, it all disappears very quickly when I'm buying \$200+ math and science textbooks each term. I'm working so hard to make this work so I can get to where I want to be in life, but the truth is, it shouldn't be a struggle. I'm one of the fortunate ones because I'm making it by. Students, many of my friends, who are waiting to go to class hungry because can't afford to buy food at my college because all their aid has been bled dry by the costs of attending college. Showing up this term, I'm missing a lot of my friends entirely because they ran out of funds for the year and have to skip attending spring term. This is all at a community college, one that has one of the lowest tuition rates in the state!

This isn't stopping, it is only getting worse. I sit on the student government at my college, and I know that the board of education at Chemeketa decided that if they don't get the funding from the state that they need, they will raise tuition next year, making education even less accessible to students like me. That's why I'm here,

asking you to make education accessible in Salem and throughout Oregon by allocating 560 million dollars to community colleges for the next biennium. Thank you.