

Date: April 6, 2015

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

From: James T. Salt, Ph.D., President, Oregon Education Association Community College Council (OEA CCC)

RE: Oregon Community College Support Fund

My name is James Salt, and I serve as President of the Oregon Education Association Community College Council (OEA CCC) that represents approximately 3500 community college faculty and staff at ten colleges across our state. I also serve as President of the Faculty Association at Lane Community College, where I also teach sociology. We are here today to request that the Legislature provide adequate funding for Oregon's community colleges during the 2015 - 2017 biennium, and specifically to provide at least \$550M. Although frankly, I have to say, even this \$550M isn't enough, and doesn't even get us back to the \$600M we would need to restore us to the original 2007-2009 budget when controlling for inflation as measured by the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI). But it does get us half-way there, and gives us the ability to plan now.

As members of both houses know very well, Oregon's community colleges serve many vital functions and interests in our state, providing hundreds of thousands of often first generation and minority transfer students a solid education in small classes taught by faculty focusing on their students' needs; developmental education for tens of thousands of students needing to strengthen their skills so they can succeed both in college courses and in the workplace; continuing education classes for our communities; and, of course, professional technical education programs that play a vital role in preparing students for family wage jobs and providing employers the skilled work forces that build our economy. One need not be a sociologist as am I to know that education is the cornerstone of a healthy and growing economy; states and countries that invest in education see ...

And yet Oregon is ranked 48th in state contributions to Higher Education, so increasingly we pass the burden of paying for education onto our students, in the forms of higher tuition and higher debt, and onto to Higher Education staff, especially in the form of turning faculty jobs into part-time assignments with far lower wage rates and benefit levels. The result is we have overburdened students working part-time jobs (at least) to try to pay their tuition and support their families while trying to make it through school, and legions of part-time faculty members working at more two or colleges to try to eek together enough income to survive and support their families, while maintaining their currency in their fields and helping their students succeed. This is not a recipe for success, educationally or economically.

Community colleges are the life force of our economy, and the best means to move our citizens and our state forward. We ask that you support community college funding at least at the \$550M level in order to do so.

Thank you.