



Date: April 5, 2017

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

From: Hanna Vaandering, President Oregon Education Association

Re: SB 5524 in support of increasing funding to the Community College Support Fund

Co-Chairs Smith-Warner and Monroe, Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Hanna Vaandering president of the Oregon Education Association and an elementary physical education teacher. The Oregon Education Association represents over 44,000 educators across the state of Oregon. We represent members at 10 of Oregon's 17 community colleges. Our Community College Council includes 17 member-led local associations that represent over 3,900 faculty and education support professionals. We are a union of professional educators and our collective voice advocates for our students, our profession and the future of quality and accessible higher education.

We appreciate the hard work of this committee and the legislature as you are faced with a very challenging budget situation. The \$550 million proposed budget before you for community colleges will be devastating for both students and the mission of our community colleges. In a time when enrollments are slipping, and colleges are considering another tuition increase, we encourage this committee to do more to stop the trend of decreasing access, increasing tuition, and escalating student debt by making the \$634 million investment our community colleges need to successfully meet the needs of Oregon students.

We know that community colleges are a smart investment. They provide critical points of access for Oregonians across our state. Community colleges serve a wide variety of Oregonians from students just out of high school continuing their education journey, to students returning to school for specific technical training they need to advance in their field, to students who are parents returning to the workforce, and many others along the spectrum. Community colleges are a central point of learning, community, and opportunity.

There is no better way to strengthen Oregon's economy than to invest in education. It is time to make difficult decisions to avoid significant increases to student tuition, layoffs to faculty, scaling back of vital programs, or increasing the already over-reliance on part time faculty. This committee was informed last week that 14 of our 17 community colleges are considering tuition increases. Six of them with increases from \$4-7 dollars per credit. The state's contribution has already fallen below students who now pay the majority of the costs. We cannot continue to price our most needy students out of higher education.

We urge this committee to take bold steps and pass budgets that have the needed resources for our schools to thrive. We cannot afford for Oregon students and families to be priced out of an education. For too long our state has been making the choice to let corporations pay the lowest tax rates in the country, rather than funding critical services at the level that Oregonians deserve. As long as Oregon remains 50th in corporate taxes, we are choosing not to fund schools at the level that would increase quality, affordability and access.

Our community college students need you to keep working to find the additional funds necessary to invest in them. Oregon students are counting on you, and the future strength of the economy is counting on you. Please fund Oregon community colleges at \$634 million and keep our state moving toward more opportunity and prosperity for everyone.