



# Service Employees International Union, Local 503, OPEU

Joint Committee on Education – of Ways and Means  
Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2017  
HB 5524

Good morning Education Sub-Committee Chairs – Representative Smith-Warner; Senator Monroe and members of the Committee.

My name is Shea Hawes - I live in Monmouth and work at Western Oregon University as an IT Specialist. I am here to testify on SB 5524 – State Support for Higher Education in Oregon. Both of my parents graduated from Eastern Oregon State College, now known as Eastern Oregon University, in the 80’s. After serving in the Army, I used the GI Bill to follow in their footsteps and graduated from EOU in 2002. Since then, I have worked at both EOU and now WOU for a total of fourteen years – and I am a proud member of SEIU Local 503.

I’d like to share that Oregon needs a strong Higher Education system in order to remain competitive and grow its economy. But today, high costs make college prohibitive for many students. Most enrolled students are currently in debt. Even considering the GI Bill, I personally came away with 20k in student loans. That was 15 years ago, today I would expect that amount to be much higher. Now the legislature is considering cuts that will lead to higher tuition and eliminate programs that help defray students’ cost of living. If these cuts go through, fewer students will be able to afford higher education, and those who pay their own way will be financially crippled.

Those of us at SEIU believe that:

Oregon is ranked 50<sup>th</sup> – dead last – in corporate tax burden. By making corporations pay their fair share, we can generate the revenue we need to invest in Higher Education.

Oregon’s universities need \$765 million. Community colleges need \$636 million. The Oregon Opportunity Grant needs \$155 million. This level of funding would ensure that Higher Education could continue to maintain current service levels without cutting programs or staff, or significantly raising tuition.

Economists agree that investing in education is among the best ways that a state can improve its economic outlook. As I am in the field - I know that Oregon’s tech industry has signaled its willingness to work with legislators to raise revenue, knowing that a well-educated workforce is critical to the industry’s success in Oregon.

I hope you and your colleagues take them up on this offer and find the revenue to fund not only Higher Ed but the many services that Oregonians need and deserve. Thank you.

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Good morning Committee Chairs – Representative Smith-Warner; Senator Monroe and members of the Education Sub-Committee. I am here to testify on HB 5524 – State Support for Higher Education in Oregon.

My name is Laura Tierney; I live in Salem and work at Western Oregon University in the Facilities department. I am a member of SEIU Local 503 – which represents about 4,500 classified employees at the 7 public universities. We do many of the jobs in libraries; campus maintenance; academic and admissions; dining, housing and administrative support that enable the campus to thrive. And we keep the institutions running to successfully sustain and educate our students.

SEIU also represent 55,000 other members across the state, middle and lower income Oregonians. These members are finding their children and grandchildren either being priced out of college or going deeply into debt to afford a post-secondary education. I was one of those parents helping out with my child's loans - while we were impacted by the recent recession - and I know how quickly the debt accumulates.

At WOU I oversee budgets including the new construction budgets with bond funding. I am a CPA and previously worked for a privately owned Fortune 500 company. I prepared multi-state corporate income and franchise tax returns and saw that Oregon does not tax corporations on sales or income to the extent surrounding states do. It troubles me to see important revenue opportunities missed when many education and service needs are going unmet here in Oregon – and that includes the impact on my employer – WOU.

Lastly – union records show that 20% of our staff - 1 in 5 university classified employees - statewide - earn less than \$15/hr. At full-time employment that qualifies them for Food Stamp Eligibility for a family of four. This is a little secret that should be unacceptable to all of us - and an issue we hope can be resolved in this biennial budget.

So, yes - we want to get to the \$767 million dollar state University support threshold that others are talking about - but we also want to strongly suggest that the only way we see getting there is to raise the revenue needed from the large corporations who must pay their fair share.

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