

March 22, 2020

Honorable Oregon Legislators
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon, 97301

Dear Legislators,

As a student, student leader (Lane Community College Gender and Sexuality Alliance President) and businessperson, I cannot stress enough the severity of the situation in which we, as a state, now find ourselves. I am currently responsible for a group of over 55 LGBTQIA+ students which now are facing things such as utility shut offs, difficulty attending online classes due to lack of technology access (either through lack of internet or lack of physical computer to access the internet), sudden fees for online classes they never expected to take and loss of income from the jobs they held at the school.

I am a single parent of two. I am now faced with the reality that over half of my income, which came from the school and the work I do there, is gone. That drops my budget down to **\$439 a month to care for myself, my teenage son and my youngest**. That must cover my utilities, medical supplies for my immunocompromised youngest child that OHP will not cover, gas for my car and whatever other needs we may have such as soap, shampoo or toilet paper. Yes, we have food stamps. We receive \$332 for the month. Yes, we use food pantries. There are days where I eat less to ensure that my kids eat their fill, that the lights and water stay on and that we have gas in the car so we can get somewhere if there is an emergency. I tell you this so you can get a glimpse of the life that I am living in hopes of achieving a better life in the most beautiful state in the nation after I graduate.

I am not alone in these quandaries. There are **over 2,000 students at Lane Community College alone** who may not be able to continue their studies, to continue to contribute to the economy of the state, because they are going to be struggling to find ways to make sure they can maintain an internet connection and to try to stay healthy enough to not need to go to the hospital, whether they have insurance or not.

Many students do not know what they are going to be doing moving forward. For nearly all of the people that I guide, they don't know how they are going to be keeping their lights on, their studies moving forward, or their jobs if they have work study. The highest priority, and easiest way to alleviate the strain on them, would be to have no additional fees done for online classes and to have all materials be included in the price of the class this term (Spring Term 2020).

Not everyone will be able to easily transition to online studies. There is a huge strain on teachers and students as we move forward. There should not be penalties for students or teachers this term. This is an unprecedented situation.

There is going to be a high demand for technology that many students do not have access to. Many of my students routinely used on-campus computers for their studies since they did not have one at home. The college, LCC, does not have enough computers to loan out for those who will need them this term. Many students do not know where to purchase ones that could handle the workload for online classes. Nor do they have the finances for them.

I am a business management student. I have had the grace of already experiencing strictly online classes. I am prepared for this and have adequate resources due to that background. Over 30 students in the GSA do not.

It is currently within your power to save the lives of students across Oregon. Keep our lights, water and internet on. Keep our phone service on. You can do this by demanding, statewide, cessation of utility shut offs and protections for work study students that do not remove their support such as food stamps due to their lack of ability to work.

Our lives are in your hands.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Desiree "Loki" Mills
Gender and Sexuality Alliance President
Lane Community College