



Oregon School Employees Association

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July 23, 2020

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
Sen. Lew Frederick and Rep. Susan McLain, Co-Chairs

Dear Co-Chairs and members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to lend our support to the approach described in the Joint Ways and Means Co-Chairs' Rebalance Plan. The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) represents 23,000 Oregon educators in nearly all levels of public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, ESDs and community colleges. OSEA members perform many of the tasks that keep Oregon public schools safe and functional for students, administrators and teachers.

The challenges facing public education in Oregon today have been made severe by both the health and financial impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. After 30 years of disinvestment in Oregon schools, the expected relief of the Student Success Act (SSA) will, in large part, have to wait for the future.

But the measured approach in the Co-Chairs' Rebalance Plan does three thoughtful and critical things: **preserve a \$9 billion State School Fund** to give K-12 districts the certainty they need to make reasonable plans for our schools this fall, **deliver SSA's desperately needed investment in early learning** and **maintain the Community College Support Fund's** legislatively approved funding level.

To be clear, these aren't "great" solutions. The costs of safely operating our education programs during the pandemic are much higher than our 2019-era budgets can accommodate. But keeping these investments intact, under the significant pressures facing the state right now, is **absolutely the right thing to do** for Oregon, for our educators and for our kids.

Thank you,

Bob Estabrook
Government Relations Specialist
Oregon School Employees Association
503-508-5203
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To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
From: Annie Kirschner, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
RE: Budget Priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic
Date: July 24, 2020

We appreciate the many budget areas the committees have recommended preserving. We strongly ask the legislature to go further and not cut any social services, which are critical to our health and wellbeing. The balancing of the budget should ensure all Oregonians have access to nutritious food and other basic needs during this crisis and that the rights of those facing racial injustice, oppression and poverty are held first and foremost in the state's policy and budget decisions.

Hunger doubled in Oregon in a matter of weeks this spring. The devastating impact of the pandemic has no doubt been shared with you. Let me amplify these experiences of your constituents:

People have lost jobs. Lost wages. Gone bankrupt. Will miss another rent payment. Are STILL waiting for unemployment checks. Have been excluded from federal stimulus relief because certain lives aren't seen as "deserving." People don't have what we need to provide for our families. We have stood in line in the rain with our children to pick up meals. Families in Warm Springs don't have water. When the internet and phone bills are too high we're shut out from everything. Some of us have to keep going to work for the paycheck, even though it's likely we'll get COVID-19 there, especially those who pick, process and prepare food. Some of us have no child care, and have no idea if our kids will go back to school on a schedule that will let us keep the jobs we have. The intertwined injustices of racism and poverty are showing up in the demographics of the daily COVID counts in and the daily protests for justice for Black lives. We're emotionally burnt out, physically cut off from family, community and spiritual support. We have had to sacrifice so much.

We heard from the state that the recession will last until at least 2024 and more cuts are coming.

Please don't ask Oregonians who have been hurt the most to sacrifice anything else, especially the public services that are our lifelines.

Specific Budget Recommendations

Education Budget

- **Thank you for prioritizing funding in the Student Success Act, particularly the Statewide Education Initiatives funding that is earmarked for school meals.** Every dollar needs to be preserved; access to free meals will now be more critical to families than we had ever imagined when the legislation was crafted. We anticipate additional funding will be needed when school resumes, as changing federal school meal policy will likely fall short of meeting the need. *Please*

see our attached issue brief on school meals during the pandemic. We would be happy to advise on this more specifically.

- (28) **Farm to School and School Gardens**- This funding is critical to the state's economic stability, our farmers' livelihoods, and student's well-being. It's more important than ever in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Farm to school sales are critical for economic development, and school gardens are a perfect outdoor social distancing educational model as students return to school in the fall.
- (46) **Oregon Promise Program** - Oregon Promise provides critical tuition assistance for Oregonians with low incomes attending community colleges. With record numbers of Oregonians out of work and needing assistance gaining new skills, this deserves to be continued.
- (50) **OSU Extension Service** - OSU extension provides critical support to our communities and should be preserved. Examples of the impact of OSU Extension's work include:
 - Supporting the long-term success of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers and food justice organizations
 - SNAP nutrition education
 - Support to direct market producers and local/community-based food systems

Human Services Budget

- (129) **TANF Pilots** for housing stabilization and Education and Training. This would eliminate both pilots at a time when need for housing stabilization is unprecedented, and the need for education and training is critical as major shifts in the labor market are occurring due to COVID.
- **Food Assistance Gaps** -Additional investments are needed. It will be critical to understand the details of the next federal stimulus in order to provide meaningful input into what the most effective forms of food assistance the state will need to invest in.

Bottom Line- When balancing the state budget, don't cut human services or education. These are critical investments during the pandemic and in our economic recovery, and any cuts will only deepen the hardship families are facing, especially for those already in poverty. We ask the state to leverage every option to keep this funding whole, and prioritize additional federal funding to those most impacted by poverty.

ISSUE BRIEF: PANDEMIC SCHOOL MEALS

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon

The Critical Function of School Meals

Over the last four months, child hunger in Oregon has spiked to one in three children, up from one in eight before the pandemic began. As school buildings closed, the threat of losing access to breakfast and lunch at school highlighted what so many of us already know: school food is an essential line item in many of our family budgets. Lines at food banks stretched for blocks and people's jobs vanished, and school districts scrambled to fill the gap, ensuring children had access to daily, nutritious meals.

School meals are an essential tool to support communities in crisis. This fall the temporary Federal pandemic policy allowing all school meals to be served for free is set to expire. While we urge the USDA to extend pandemic flexibilities, the state needs to take action so families and schools don't struggle.

A budget crisis in Oregon's school nutrition programs

School Districts are already feeling the budget impact of the previous school year due to the increased costs of providing meals remotely. Pandemic meal service models require the purchase of additional equipment and packaging materials, and increased costs for additional labor and transportation. If providing meals continues to operate at an increased cost with no additional funding, schools may be forced to reduce their meal service, cutting off a critical source of nutrition to children.

Provide Essential Support to Children and Schools

To ensure children will have access to school food throughout the pandemic, Oregon must:

1. **Disburse CARES Act Funding to Schools District Nutrition Funds.** An estimated \$8.75 million is needed from the state to reimburse meal providers for actual costs they incur in these areas. This funding will ensure that school districts are able to provide:
 - o Meal delivery if a school district is providing remote learning opportunities.
 - o Safe packaging for the meals as "Grab and Go" style meals.
 - o Personal Protective Equipment for meal program staff.
 - o Extra labor costs for increased staffing and labor to pack and deliver meals.
2. **Protect Student Success Act Meal Provisions.** The Student Success Act's landmark investments in child nutrition acknowledged the crucial role nutrition plays in child learning and development. Lawmakers must not allow any cuts to funding in these basic needs programs, as the pandemic has shown the critical impact school meals have on families and especially as food insecurity will continue to increase. Specifically:
 - o Fully fund the Community Eligibility Provision Fund, optimizing federal school meal reimbursements while at the same time providing the highest number of free meals to students and cutting down on administrative burden
 - o Maintain the Expanded Income Eligibility Guidelines, making free school meals available to more families by increasing the eligibility guideline to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.
 - o Continue to provide Breakfast After the Bell Equipment Grants. These "breakfast after the bell" grants support schools to purchase equipment for physical distancing protocols such as serving meals in classrooms or grab-and-go.

It is in these moments of crisis that we can clearly see who and what our state values most. This is not an everyday question of budget allocations, but rather we care enough to ensure all our kids have access to the food they need to learn, grow, and thrive.



July 23, 2020

Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means
Education Subcommittee

Co-chair Frederick, Co-chair McLain, and Members of the Committee,

In 2020, after working in partnership for three years, Children First for Oregon (CFFO) and The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon (CTFO) merged to form Our Children Oregon (OCO). OCO's mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. We elevate data and the voices of communities to amplify the need and collaboratively develop policy and public investments to improve overall child and family well-being across the state. We continue to convene the Children's Agenda, a partnership of 120 organizations, looking at the holistic needs of children.

We are writing today to express our strong support for the implementation of a racial equity lens with regards to budgeting decisions. We recognize that communities and subpopulations are differently situated due to a wide range of systemic and societal factors, including variances in education, housing, language, racism, and intergenerational trauma. We approach these challenges using a targeted universalist strategy theory of change. Targeted universalism supports the needs of the most marginalized while reminding us that we are all part of the same social fabric. Through the application of this framework, we strive to enhance overall outcomes for *all* children by paying particular attention to the role of racial equity, its impact on

budgeting decisions, and its effects on Oregon's most marginalized and underserved communities.

We appreciate the budget framework and the Ways and Means Co-chair Principles that were released last week, and acknowledge that the budget reduction process is a challenging one.

We urge you to support the following:

- Ground budget decisions in racial equity
- Target reductions to avoid across the board cuts
- Apply federal dollars
- Use reserves strategically
- Improve the public process

Ground budget decisions in racial equity

Racial equity benefits all Oregonians. By prioritizing and centering the voices and lived experiences of the most marginalized communities, we will be moving towards a stronger future where all Oregonians are afforded the opportunity to live with dignity, and allows us to begin to correct historic injustices. So many Oregonians have suffered over the past few months from the pandemic, however the Black, Native, Latinx, and Pacific Islander communities are among the hardest hit. It is the duty of the state to ensure all Oregonians are supported, and the way to do that is through the application of a racial equity lens to ensure an equitable recovery that leaves no community behind.

Target reductions to avoid across the board cuts

We appreciate the approach of the Ways and Means process to avoid across the board cuts. Only by listening to the lived experiences of marginalized communities and centering their interests will Oregon truly serve the people of the state. We must listen to our most vulnerable populations to understand what they need and ensure that they are receiving the necessary

resources and support during these uncertain times. Across the board cuts would disproportionately impact those furthest from justice.

Apply federal dollars

We hope to see another strong federal package in the coming weeks, and urge legislators to continue to maximize federal dollars to support departments, programs, and initiatives identified by communities to have the greatest impact towards an equitable recovery.

Use reserves strategically

As we look back at the Great Recession, some of our deepest cuts to programs were not seen immediately, but in the 2011-13 budget that followed. We appreciate the approach of the Ways and Means Co-Chairs' budget framework to use the Education Stability Fund and limit the ending fund balance, and to hold back on the Rainy Day Fund until we see future revenue forecasts. We need to look towards a more equitable future for Oregon and that requires a long-term approach and strategic, informed decisions.

Improve the public process

Acknowledging the importance of a racial equity lens also means acknowledging the systemic barriers marginalized communities face when advocating for their own interests. The way policies and systems are designed and implemented can either prevent or perpetuate the factors that can lead to poor outcomes. How Oregonians elevate the voices of marginalized communities impacts the level of investment to serve their interest. Communities must be outfitted with the data and tools needed to advocate for themselves, and the legislative process needs to be more transparent and provide information in a timely manner.

The impact of COVID-19 has revealed disparities across health, education, and the economy. These disparities are evidence that the State has much more work to do to target our investments. We must ensure an even playing field for children to reach their full potential, so that children and their families have access to the resources that they need to thrive in every

community. We know that communities have been doing work to support an equitable future for our children for a long time with inadequate resources. We must focus on budget decisions that will shift us from what we have done in the past towards making the investments needed for our collective future.

To look for a return to “normalcy” is to look to a pre-COVID past that was not working for far too many of our children. Now is the opportunity to do better by Oregon’s children and families. This is the time to reimagine the world we want to live in and make it real with each decision we make. Let’s start today in the approach we utilize to balance the 2019-2021 budget.

Sincerely,

Chris Coughlin, Director of Policy, Advocacy and Community Engagement

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

Our Children Oregon

Voices United, Opportunities Reimagined.

Fight for our Future Testimony

Fight for Our Future is a growing coalition that includes organizations serving children and families, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) organizations, older adults and seniors, labor unions and advocacy groups who are coming together during a time of unprecedented demand for state services amidst a deep recession to call on our leaders to finally address hundreds of years of systemic racism in how public services are funded and provided.

The health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on all Oregonians - but in particular Black Indigenous and Oregonians of color - have been both devastating and unsurprising. Constitutional, legal, institutional and societal barriers in place for generations have contributed to the devastating inequities we see today. We have an opportunity to dismantle white supremacy and anti-Black racism within our structures and institutions, and we can no longer ignore how these systems serve some and harm others, particularly Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

As *Oregonian/Oregonlive* reported recently, in a state whose population is 75 percent white, about two-thirds of new positive cases were found among people of color. A *New York Times* investigation showed that these extreme disparities cannot be explained away by lack of healthcare access or other factors. Rather, people of color are simply more exposed to COVID-19 as part of their daily lives. For example, 43% of Black and Latinx workers are working in production and service jobs that do not allow them to work safely from home while only 25% of white workers do.

We also know that we are just at the beginning of the economic issues that the pandemic is creating in Oregon and local communities. We need to kick-start our economy by investing in our communities, supporting workers, and protecting services like health care and education. Now, more than ever, we need to protect public services. We believe the COVID crisis and this particular moment in history has created an unprecedented opportunity to challenge the status quo, to resist a return to "normal," and to raise up and leverage the incredible resilience of BIPOC communities and create a better future for all Oregonians.

Black, Indigenous, People of Color, women, older adults and seniors, immigrants and low-wage workers have borne the brunt of this crisis. The budgets you create should recognize that and support better solutions rather than foist further harm. We appreciate the work you have done so far to recognize that.

For this year's budget rebalance, we support the prudent use of reserves and savings that allow us to maintain public services as Congress finalizes a new emergency relief package for states. We know that no state can get through this time alone and hope that ultimately Congress will

understand that the best way to get through this crisis is to ensure that state budgets, and the families and communities that rely on them, can remain whole.

We appreciate the stated principles from your framework: “Prioritize and address immediate problems and issues first, considering equity while focusing on the needs of individual Oregonians, workers, and Oregon businesses most affected by COVID-19,” and “Prioritize programs and services so that reductions are based on values rather than an “across the board” methodology.” We would like to see action following those principles with racial equity and transparency at the center.

To us, this means that in addition to bringing a new approach to state budgeting, we must recognize that public services are more important than ever. There is an unprecedented need for food assistance, unemployment benefits, the Oregon Health Plan, and other services to help people who have lost their jobs or cannot return to work because of COVID-19. In our schools, teachers have had to quickly create new distance learning curricula and distributed school lunches to low-income families after schools were closed and are now grappling with how to safely educate students as the pandemic continues. Educators and all public workers have been on the front lines helping our state respond to the coronavirus. We need to make sure they have the resources they need to keep doing their jobs for Oregonians until things are safe. The Great Recession taught us that cuts to public services and the people who provide them delay recovery and harm people of color. Oregon cannot make the same mistake again.

As you step into the multi-year challenge of balancing our state’s budget, we ask that you and the state agencies usher in a new era of transparency and access to the state budget process and use a racial equity lens when making decisions. The budgets you create and approve in Salem affect the lives of every Oregonian. The figures on your spreadsheets resonate in every part of the state. Who is supported, who is abandoned? Who is listened to and who is ignored?

We look forward to partnering with lawmakers in this important work. We feel it is imperative that budgets be presented with more context and specificity on who is impacted and why those decisions were made. For example, Where there is a cut or increase it would be helpful to know more about the cuts. What percentage of cut it is to the program, for example or what impact it will have on staffing either directly or indirectly.

Rather than simply restore and return to the status quo, this crisis is an opportunity to revision our state and implement the visions Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have repeatedly shared and dreamed of since the inception of this country and build a recovery that fundamentally restructures Oregon’s economy to be more equitable and fair for everyone. Let us work together to help Oregon reimagine what is possible and recover and rebuild into a better future for our children, our families and our communities.

Fight for Our Future coalition includes these organizations:





Date: July 23, 2020

To: Joint Ways & Means Education Subcommittee, Co-chairs Frederick and McLain and Members

VIA: jwmed.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations Consultant

RE: *Budget Rebalance for Education (P-12)*

On behalf of OEA's 42,000 members, I am honored to submit to the record our general support for the principles and decisions found in the Co-Chairs' budget rebalancing plan as it relates to the education sector specifically.

We have fought for years to improve Oregon's investment in public education, which has been profoundly underfunded for three decades, and we were thrilled to be a part of the effort to dramatically improve that funding commitment through passage of the Student Success Act in 2019. The revenue- and economics-related impacts of the COVID-19 crisis has temporarily damaged our state's effort to make good on that renewed investment. It has also created deep losses in General Fund and Lottery receipts, making your jobs all the more challenging in these times.

That's why we wish to **thank you for the rebalance guiding principles** that, like the Student Success Act itself, put the needs of our most vulnerable and marginalized students at the center of your priorities. We share that goal wholeheartedly.

We particularly support the maintenance of the Legislatively adopted **State School Fund** appropriation of \$9 billion. Given that we are half-way through the biennium and about to start the second school year in the cycle, keeping the major investment in our K-12 system whole is crucial. This is especially true under the circumstances: no matter how districts open in the fall, there will be a need for significant investment. Safety protocols, transportation increases, HVAC retooling, technology upgrades, and other purchases will be needed.

The National Association of School Business Officials has estimated that the "average" school district in the U.S. **may incur reopening expenses of \$1.778 million**. Extrapolating from their math, we find that this translates to **between \$250 million and \$300 million** for Oregon public schools in the coming weeks and months. While we are not testifying today for an increased appropriation to cover these additional expenses, we share the information to explain how crucial the maintenance of the State School Fund budget is, given these realities.

Though we were hoping for more than \$150 million in Student Success Act resources for the coming year, we do appreciate **the co-chairs' emphasis on mental health** as the #1 priority for use of these limited Student Investment Account dollars, and furthermore, we appreciate the maintenance of those programs found in the Statewide Account that fund **equity programs, EI/ECSE, and other services for our students in greatest need**. It is our fervent hope that, once the economy recovers post-pandemic, our students will be fully funded as the legislation intended.

We would like to especially call out some of the thoughtful line-item cut choices proposed: for instance, by **suspending statewide assessment expenses**, this rebalancing plan appropriately puts a hierarchy-of-needs lens on education budgeting. And by looking for fund shift opportunities and vacancy savings wherever possible, to minimize the harm of cuts, you have made actionable the goals of protecting the highest priority educational investments. For these exhaustive efforts, we thank you.

Finally, for your willingness to tap the **Education Stability Fund** to help stabilize the budget mid-cycle, we applaud you. As an entity that helped to create and push for ways to capitalize this rainy-day fund, our association believes that you are using it how and when it was intended by the designers.

Going forward, we understand that this rebalance is unlikely to be the final painful fiscal reality check prompted by these unprecedented times. Looking to the next biennium, we stand ready to help ensure that future budgetary decisions continue to hew to the guiding principles with which you are operating today: to center equity and the needs of our most vulnerable people, both in the education and other sector budgets, in your decisions. We hope that future decisions will be made in coordination with the Revenue Committees, whose proactive actions to ensure that the gaps are smaller could include:

- Disconnecting from the tax breaks awarded in the CARES Act (could be a \$250 million state revenue loss);
- Pausing existing tax breaks for the wealthy and profitable corporations until the crisis is over;
- Using federal dollars strategically to lessen the shortfall;
- Tapping other reserves as needed to minimize cuts.

We would close with one final point: too often, the education budget is seen only as an expenditure, not an investment, and certainly not as an **economic stimulus tool**. Nevertheless, economists see certain state spending as a way to dig out of economic devastation more quickly. In the case of education budgeting, because our school districts are the largest employer in the majority of communities and in at least the top three everywhere else, investments in public schools **create jobs** (for every 10 public education jobs, nine more are supported in the private sector*). And long term, a dollar invested in our schools delivers a rate of return on investment of 14.3 percent – much higher than stock market returns! Therefore, this budget represents not only a human investment in our kids, but also, one of the best economic stimulus tools our state could employ.

*EcoNorthwest study 2002. Copies available upon request.

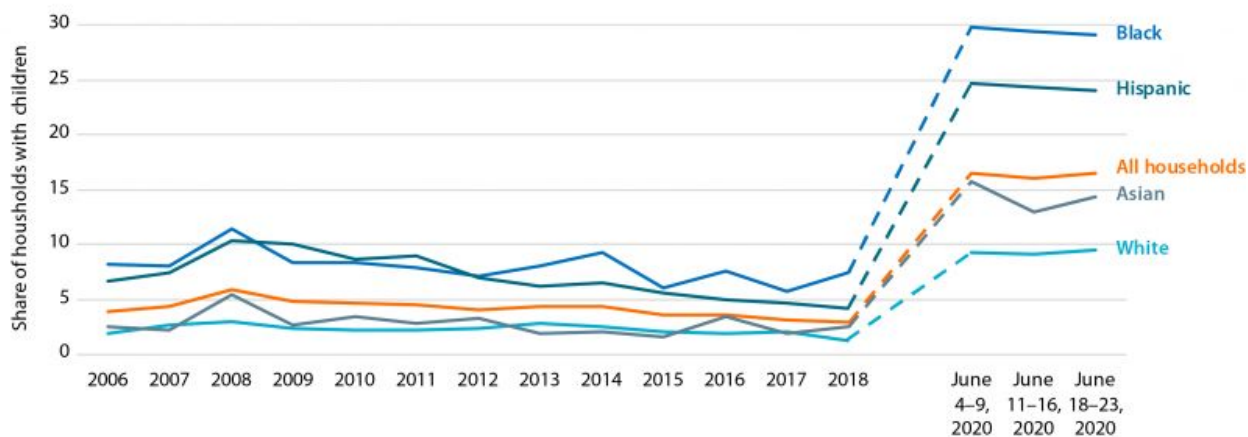
TO: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
 FROM: Matt Newell-Ching, Public Policy Manager, Oregon Food Bank
 RE: Statement and Recommendations on Budget Proposal
 DATE: July 23, 2020



We must meet the moment by centering the realities of Oregonians during this crisis. Oregon’s budget needs to be modified to meet the current realities. And the realities are that our communities are hurting. Our task is to lead our state through this public health and economic crisis so that we may emerge stronger on the other side.

- Food insecurity in Oregon has doubled since the beginning of the pandemic, according to Oregon State University.
- Over 120,000 additional Oregonians received SNAP in June compared to February. Requests for food in our network of 1,400 emergency food agencies has increased significantly.
- Black, Indigenous, people of color, women, immigrants and low-wage workers have borne the brunt of the crises, as is always the case. Nationwide, the percentage of children experiencing food insecurity has increased five-fold since 2018, and is nearly triple the rate during the peak of the Great Recession. A recent analysis by the Hamilton Project and Brookings reveal that racial disparities in child food insecurity - significant prior to COVID - are widening at alarming rates due systemic racism:

FIGURE 1.
 Share of Households with Children in which the Children Are Food Insecure by Race/Ethnicity, 2006–20



Source: Census Household Pulse Survey 2020 (Waves 6-8); Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement 2006-18; author's calculations.
 Note: Surveys have been weighted to be representative of households with children, overall and by race/ethnicity. In the CHHPS (2020 datapoint), respondents were asked "Please indicate whether the next statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true in the last 7 days for the children living in your household who are under 18 years old. 'The children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food.'" In the FSS, respondents were asked "Now I'm going to read you several statements that people have made about the food situation of their children. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true in the last 12 months for (your child/children living in the household who are under 18 years old). '(My/Our child was/The children were) not eating enough because (I/we) just couldn't afford enough food.' Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?" Food insecurity statistics for race/ethnicities not shown were imprecisely measured.



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Recommendations

Start with the critical needs of our communities. Then work backwards.

We fundamentally reject the notion that the primary way to balance Oregon's budget should be through cuts, many of which will fall on the backs of Oregonians facing food insecurity, housing insecurity, and who face a long road back to full-time employment because of the impacts of COVID. Instead, we need to start by centering the realities Oregonians are facing, and ask ourselves how we can stand together to meet each other's needs. To do that, we believe Oregon's budget should start with the following principles:

- **Maximize the impact of anticipated federal stimulus.** As of this hearing, the details of that stimulus are not yet known. We are advocating for it to contain robust assistance for people experiencing unemployment and food insecurity, people excluded from prior forms of assistance, people who face critical caregiving and sick needs, and aid directly to states. It is frankly impossible at this juncture for us to tell the legislature specifically how to best meet gaps in need when we don't yet know what will and will not be part of that package.
- **Use reserves prudently.** To put it mildly, we are at the beginning of the rainy day for which we have been saving. We should allocate reserves during this rebalance as well as during future rebalances. We believe using funds from the Education Stabilization Fund in this budget is a good start.
- **Re-imagine systems.** We applaud the legislature for taking first steps to address mass incarceration in this budget, a practice that is both a root cause of hunger and that perpetuates systemic racism. We look forward to seeing the results of additional conversations aimed at re-imagining public safety and re-investing in human needs.
- **Consider revenue options from Oregonians who continue to do well.** Most major crisis in our nation's history called for a shared sense of sacrifice to meet the challenges of the moment. An unprecedented number of Oregonians are hurting and will need help to get through these uncertain times. We believe asking for additional revenue from those who continue to do well is appropriate at this time in order to meet critical needs.
- **Analyze the Racial and Equity Impacts of Proposed Cuts.** We must be attuned to this historic uprising for racial justice. **We insist that proposals to cut programs be analyzed using a racial equity impact analysis.** It is a moral imperative that we not balance this budget on the backs of Oregonians who faced disparities to begin with. Decisions must be made with transparency about potential disparate harm of budget cuts.

Comments on Specific Areas

Education Budget

- **Ensuring access to school meal replacements amid uncertainty of in-person schools.** We hope to see increased federal options to continue to allow Oregon to issue money for groceries instead of school meals (when in-person school isn't possible), and to



continue meal pickup sites for families that are able to pick up meals. We must also ensure that students eligible for school meals at no charge through the SSA will also have the same options. We will be able to advise on this more specifically upon agreement of a federal stimulus.

- **(28) Farm to School and School Gardens.** This funding is critical to the state's economic stability, our farmers' livelihoods, and student's well-being. It's more important than ever in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Farm to school sales are critical for economic development, and school gardens are a perfect outdoor social distancing educational model as students return to school in the fall.
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Human Services Budget

- **Food Assistance Gaps** - It will be critical to understand the details of the next federal stimulus in order to provide meaningful input into what the most effective forms of food assistance the state will need to invest in.
- **(129) TANF Pilots for housing stabilization and Education and Training.** This would eliminate both pilots at a time when need for housing stabilization is unprecedented, and the need for education and training is critical as major shifts in the labor market are occurring due to COVID.

Other Budget Considerations

- **Addressing potential gaps in next stimulus.** Prior iterations of federal stimulus excluded aid such as UI and direct payments to many Oregonians, including Oregonians who are immigrants. Oregon should ensure we are in a position to address future unmet needs prioritizing equitable outcomes.
- **Replenishing the Emergency Board.** We believe it would be wise to replenish the Emergency Board funds for a range of unknowable needs, ranging from fire season to food security.



07/22/2020

President Courtney, Speaker Kotek, Senators Johnson and Steiner Hayward and Representative Rayfield,

On behalf of the nearly 130,000 students enrolled at our institutions and the more than 40,000 Oregonians employed at our universities, thank you for recognizing the importance of protecting investments in education in the budget framework you released last week. Protecting investments in public education while addressing the state's overall fiscal challenge is a difficult task. We are grateful for your efforts.

On each of our campuses, we have already implemented many of the tools used in your framework; instituting hiring freezes, eliminating non-essential spending and travel, utilizing furloughs and the Work Share program, and accepting voluntary pay reductions from many of our highest paid employees.

Oregon's public universities are committed partners in supporting a path to economic recovery and stability for our state and to use education as a means to also address reimagining a better tomorrow. The work is well underway. Creative instructors went remote in days. Researchers pivoted immediately to understand the virus. Innovation is accelerating. Education is adapting. Business as usual is not an option. We cannot just rebuild our economy; we must retool it in a way that addresses the systemic bias that has created social and economic inequities for generations.

When the Great Recession hit in 2008, Oregon saw state revenues drop precipitously. Lacking significant balances in the state's rainy-day fund, or education stability fund, lawmakers had to act quickly to balance the state budget. The cuts made to higher education greatly exceeded those applied to most other sectors of the state budget, at a time when Oregonians were turning to community colleges and universities to obtain new skills and degrees. Between the 2009-2011 biennium and 2011-2013 biennium the Public University Support Fund was reduced from \$575 million to \$437 million a cut of more than \$138 million, or a 24% reduction. During this time, universities were forced to balance budgets through a variety of strategies, including spending one-time funds, significant workforce reductions, large increases in nonresident enrollment, and double-digit tuition increases across all campuses.

Today's public university students are far more diverse, are much more likely to be first generation, and have fewer financial resources. Increasing tuition and expanding student debt are not an option.

COVID-19 is exacerbating socioeconomic disparities across all demographics, across all of Oregon. Investments in public universities promote equity, increase opportunity, and erode income inequality. The increasingly diverse face of Oregon is reflected in the students that enroll at Oregon's public universities.

- One in three are students of color;

- One in five are first generation students; and
- Two in five receive need-based grants.

Difficult choices lie ahead. Oregon leaders could feel as though they have no option but to repeat practices of the past, cutting funding for community colleges, universities, and student financial aid programs. Pre- COVID-19 food and housing insecurity plus high levels of debt have already made higher education more difficult to access and complete; further divestment from the state would only amplify social inequity in Oregon.

We recognize these challenges, and know that without significant additional resources from our federal government we will be unable to weather the coming biennia without cuts that will devastate our campus communities. That reality led public universities to spearhead an effort to gather more than 40 organizations in joining a letter to Oregon's Congressional delegation urging support for state stabilization funds. It is our sincere hope that congressional leaders and Oregon's Senators and Representatives will heed this call and pass meaningful legislation in the coming weeks.

Preserving investments in today's students will create a brighter future. The willingness of policymakers to commit resources to protect the state's fragile cradle-to-career public education system will likely determine if the impact of COVID-19 is measured in years or in generations.

Please know that your universities stand ready to help in any way possible. We thank you again for your efforts to protect funding for higher education.

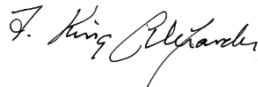
With Gratitude,



Thomas A. Insko
President
Eastern Oregon University



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President
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Michael Schill
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