

SB 5538 Testimony
February 19, 2019

Co-Chairs & Members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Chad Brown. I am a veteran of the US Army and a senior at Oregon State University, a board member of OSU Student Veterans of America, and organizer of a growing group of Student Veterans of Oregon. Due to midterms, the coalition of student veterans from OSU, the University of Oregon, and Western Oregon University were unable to join me today.

I am an out of state student who chose to go to college in Oregon for many reasons, but one important one is the investment Oregon makes in veteran students by allowing them to pay in-state tuition for school. I know many more veterans who are here in the State of Oregon for the same exact reason.

I would like to speak to you today about two reasons why I believe the State of Oregon should be investing more, not less, in student veterans via the grant funding enabled by the passage of Measure 96 in 2016.

1. A recent study at the University of Utah revealed that over 45% of student veterans have thought about suicide 20% of student veterans have a plan to make that thought a reality. The leading cause for these dismal statistics was anxiety. Anxiety that can be helped by having a proper resource center and staff to speak with, by having a veteran population on campus that has a place to organize and build one another up.
 - This investment in student veterans is a preventative measure, not of just suicides, but for those who have been missed. Those who drop out or fall through the cracks and resort to substance abuse
 - This investment can reduce the costs of the safety net measures meant to catch veterans who are in trouble by supporting veterans while they are working to improve their own lives.
 - Oregon currently is on par with the rest of the nation for percentage of student veterans enrolled in school but has a higher percentage of student veterans who never graduate.
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3. Another reason I believe we should be investing more in student veterans is economic: Oregon receives a significant return on its investments in student veterans.
 - One result of the ODVA campus grant program is that it attracts student veterans to come to Oregon to go to school. By bringing more veterans into our communities the state receives greater federal resources.
 - A wise man once reminded me that the investments made in those who came home from WW2 helped transition the Greatest Generation of veterans from war to civilian life and gave them the opportunity to help build the greatest economic boom our nation has ever seen. Today, veterans from the Gulf War to present make up the largest veteran population in the country. I believe it is our duty to continue to invest in them. If the state of Oregon invests in them, they will return that investment in the State of Oregon through jobs, innovation, new business, etc.

For these reasons, I am asking that the campus funds program be funded at least at a replenished rate of \$1 million instead of the proposed 30% reduction that it currently faces.

Lottery revenues do not justify any reduction in funding from the current biennium. The December forecast indicated that Oregon lottery revenues for Measure 96 programs were \$2.4 million (12.5%) over the amount that was used to set the budget for the current biennium. Lottery revenues for the 2019-21 biennium are projected to stabilize at this increased level. Given the growth in revenues and stable forecast, we see no reason why the funding for campus grants should be reduced by 30% over the level that was invested during the current biennium.

We also working on the Senate side on SB 35 to support the elimination of the sunset on this program and to increase the limit which public universities and community colleges may use these funds for salaries from \$25,000 to \$50,000. We agree that Universities should match any funding from these grants that is used for salaries. We

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.