

Oregon Student Association



March 20th, 2019

To: Ways and Means Sub Education Committee
From: Odalis Aguilar Aguilar
RE: Oregon Opportunity Grant Funding

Good morning Co-chair Senator Fredrick and Representative McClain,

My name is Odalis Aguilar Aguilar and I am a first-year student at the University of Oregon studying Ethnic Studies and Spanish as well as a part time policy associate for the Oregon Student Association.

I graduated high school last spring from Milwaukie High School in Milwaukie which is a city neighboring Portland and was able to graduate with thousands of dollars thanks to the ASPIRE program. I met the coordinator who was Celina Avila at the time early on during the second semester of my senior year and not too long after I joined the program. It was also during the time where I was filling out financial aid applications and scholarships to fund my education. As a student who worked almost a full-time job during high school and some weeks I also worked overtime, was also a full time student and was president of the 2018 class I had almost little to no time to focus on the college application process.

I would spend my excused periods and lunches with Ms. Avila who would help me draft essays for scholarships and overall assist in navigating the higher education system. As a first generation student I was able to relate to Ms. Avila because she too was a first generation student who struggled but managed to not only receive a bachelor's degree in English but she also obtained her masters degree. ASPIRE gave me not only a mentor but a life long friend who I still keep in contact with. To this day she still helps me revise my essays or is always there when I need advice. I am so thankful Milwaukie High is able to provide such a great resource for students like me and I hope ASPIRE continues to reach other students.

If I am being completely honest with you, the only reason I committed to be a duck at the University of Oregon was because of Pathway Oregon and the amount of financial aid I received. Once in college, I received the Oregon Opportunity Grant which has helped me levitate the cost of attending the UofO. The Oregon Opportunity grant has played a key role in my education which I am beyond thankful for. Without it I do not think I would be able to afford attending a higher education institution. While I was able to receive this grant, from all of the applicants I have learned that only 40% of students receive this aid. It is crucial that the state makes an investment to be able to grant 16,000 more financial aid awards for other

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students throughout the state. I urge this committee to fully fund the Oregon Opportunity Grant and find the funds to make a meaningful investment of at least \$252 million for the future of Oregon Students.

Thank you for your time,
Odalis Aguilar Aguilar
She/her/ella
Policy Associate, Oregon Student Association

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