



James Merryman
President/CEO

March 21, 2019

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

As CEO of OFD (Oregon Freeze Dry) with 500 employees, and Board Chair of Linn-Benton Community College, I know the importance of LBCC in our community.

LBCC is valuable to business and our region. I see firsthand how the college contributes to the economic vitality of our area by providing needed training to support businesses such as ours and industry of all sizes. Each year we hire a number of LBCC graduates from various programs. In fact, I doubt we could have added 124 full-time jobs in the last 10 years without the training and education LBCC provides. A trained workforce is essential both in a global marketplace and to continue Oregon's economic growth.

LBCC's leadership and partnership with local high schools has had a significant effect in our region. Students who were once in danger of dropping out or just going through the motions have finally made the connection between school and work. Their eyes have been opened to the possibility of leading successful lives in our area, choosing to stay in school and eventually pursue these newly discovered local opportunities.

When we fund Oregon's community colleges, we are funding critical components for Oregon's economic growth. Please consider fully funding our community colleges and prevent the cost of education from becoming another roadblock to potential and existing students. By shifting the financial burden onto our students, it does not meet the goals of the state for providing education and jobs for everyone. It will exclude those who cannot afford to pay.

I urge you make funding Oregon's community colleges a top priority for the students they serve and the businesses they help grow, and support the Higher Education Coordinating Commission recommendation of a \$647M base budget.

Respectfully,

A blue ink signature of Jim Merryman, consisting of several overlapping loops and a final horizontal stroke.

Jim Merryman
President/CEO