

April 2, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
From: United Academics University of Oregon, AAUP-AFT Local 3209
Re: HB 5024

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and members of the committee:

Anyone witnessing the amount of proposed legislation this year can attest to how much Oregonians want to see our students prosper, from their very earliest years of learning all the way through to higher education. This is especially important for Oregon's first-generation students who not only have the chance to create better opportunities for themselves but can ultimately break generational chains of inequality for their families and, furthermore, benefit our Oregon communities long-term. Clearly, good intentions do not make such aspirations reality. We here at United Academics at the University of Oregon ask for an increase to the Public University Support Fund proposed in House Bill 5024 so we can support our students as they need and deserve, while offering them not just worthwhile degrees, but a truly world-class educational experience.

Though we are speaking on behalf of the Faculty union, first and foremost we are faculty. Some of us are tenured professors; some are instructors. Our research and scholarly interests are wide-ranging: we teach, advise, mentor, and support first-year students to graduates already contributing to both our University's stellar research profile and innovative teaching practices. We know what our students need in order to succeed, but we have come to this knowledge the hard way: having watched first-generation students miss a class or two, then gone a week, and then we never see them again. We've seen non-traditional *and* traditional students work with such tenacity while raising a family; caring for elders; balancing multiple, low-paying jobs while taking a full-load of classes, and then simply disappear from campus after the end of an academic year because they can't afford to take out another loan. We teach our students about things like "structural inequality," yet by failing one of these students, we've failed their families and the generations prior that worked to give their loved one a chance at something different, something that would radically change their economic stability and mobility.

Fortunately, we've also witnessed when things go right. If students know their bills are going to be paid and they have enough money to eat, they can focus on their studies. When advisors aren't overburdened to the point of diminished utility, they can connect with their students, know when they're falling behind, and support them to progress forward. If we grow our number of advisors, then they are able to make sure transfer students are benefiting from current and proposed legislation to make transfer pathways equitable and smoother. All student-serving units, especially our advising units, are crucial to 2998's success. When teaching faculty aren't working under the constant threat of non-renewal while working above and beyond their remuneration, they continually improve and innovate the ways they facilitate students' critical thought and intellectual growth from their first day at the UO through a senior thesis. When students from under-represented communities find themselves overwhelmed by a campus that hasn't always been welcoming to folks like them, they can meet with faculty who share similar backgrounds and have spaces and opportunities on campus to connect with their communities.

We cannot be committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in name only, but must be ready to support diverse student populations by recruiting and retaining faculty of color and other

underrepresented faculty and supporting growing student communities. A true commitment to Equity initiatives also means supporting our lowest-paid faculty, staff, and Graduate Employees so they, too, can benefit from job security and decent pay. Supporting these workers will help lessen the economic impact on Eugene, Springfield, and Lane County, especially given that the Eugene area is “the second tightest housing market in the nation” (Better [Housing](#) Together). Without adequate funding, all of these crucial and fundamental components that all ultimately weigh on student success simply crumble under a weight we cannot bear given the current funding levels. None of these tried and true components of student success are radical or new. They are quite basic to the mission of our University. **Without an increase of \$186 million to the proposed amount stated in House Bill 5024 for Public Universities, we simply cannot offer a baseline of support to our students, and we are setting our students up for failure, and ultimately failing our communities and our State.**