

April 10, 2019

Co-Chair Roblan, Co-Chair Smith Warner, Co-Vice Chair Knopp, Co-Vice Chair Smith and Members of the Joint Committee on Student Success

Subject: Don't Leave College Students Behind in New Education Funding

Legislators have a once-in-decade opportunity to invest in Oregon students and reform Oregon's tax system, but the current plan laid out in House Bill 2019 leaves college students behind.

By 2020, 65 percent of new jobs are expected to require education and training beyond high school. To provide Oregonians the opportunity they need to thrive and for businesses to help grow the economy, we need to support students from cradle to career. Since Measure 5, Oregon students have seen tuition increases vastly outpace inflation while programs and services have been cut because state investment fell further behind. Student debt is higher than it's ever been.

Engineering has always captivated my interest. From designing Lego planes to taking apart dozens of old TVs and computers and putting them back together, I have always had a fascination with how things work. At the age of seven, I decided that I would pursue 'rocket science' as a career. I grew up in an impoverished family whose highest education was high school, and I was oblivious to career paths outside of construction or the enlisted military. It wasn't until my freshman year of high school that I learned 'rocket science' could be an actual career choice in the field of mechanical and aerospace engineering.

My affinity for math and mechanics, combined with a desire to become the first in my family to finish college, drove me to pursue a degree in the fascinating field of engineering. It was challenging to begin my education, since I was the sole provider for a disabled, single mother and two little sisters. Two years ago, after years of working my way up in various jobs, I decided to move to McMinnville on my own to be better able to afford a living while pursuing an education. I soon discovered Portland Community College and learned of the engineering transfer program. I decided to attend full-time with intentions of transferring to Oregon State.

During my time in Oregon I have found and connected with various engineering-related companies, such as Meggitt, A-dec, and Intel. Upon obtaining a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at Oregon State, I intend to start my career at a local manufacturing company and hopefully end up in the aerospace sector at a company like Boeing or Northrop Grumman. The journey's been long, but I've always kept my destination in mind: I hope to break the cycle of poverty for my family.

We urge you to support Governor Kate Brown's call for including post-secondary education in the spending proposal before this committee.

Lorenzo Thomsen