

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.

Before discovering natural medicine, I had never imagined myself entering any facet of the medical field. But now I am working on my Associate of Arts - Oregon Transfer degree and am focused on doing well in my biology and chemistry series. My goal is to earn a Bachelors in Integrative Health Studies and eventually a Doctorate in Naturopathic Medicine. I began at Portland Community College.

When my partner and I first moved here to start my educational journey, we did not have a stable home. Without rental history or credit, and with the little money I had, I bought a small, used trailer. We had trouble finding a permanent spot to park. Our best temporary solution was to move every week, trying to find any vacancy. I didn't have internet access at home to study, battled with food insecurity, and didn't have access to health insurance. To make matters worse, the trailer developed water damage from the rain, and toxic mold started to grow.

Although my life is far from comfortable, I was finally able to find an apartment. I am grateful for what I have overcome and for the support I received from PCC's Career Exploration Center, Women's Resource Center, counseling, and my partner. I would not be where I am today without their help. This experience emphasizes my resilience, my adaptability, my capacity to make sacrifices, and my dedication to following through with my career plans. Community Colleges play a huge role in helping students like me get into the workforce.

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

Natalie Kennedy