

Dear Sub-Committee on Education,

I am both an alumnus and employee (since 2010) of Portland State University and work directly developing student leaders who have successfully led and operated campus creative and social services for fifty years such as Littman+White Galleries, 5th Avenue Cinema, Portland State Professional Sound, and the newer PSU Food Pantry.

I see every day how students' lives are transformed through their experience of actively engaging in their higher education learning opportunities. We know now more than ever that a high school degree is insufficient for Oregonians to lead fulfilling, successful lives and for Oregon businesses to meet the employment demands for their workforce. Not only is education beyond high school a pathway out of poverty, but an educated Oregon citizenry is essential to any equitable democracy.

I write today to appeal to you about increasing the funding allocation for public universities in HB 5024. An investment in Portland State students is an investment in Oregon's future because nearly 80% of our students are from Oregon and 80% stay to work in Oregon after graduating. Our graduates are critical to Portland's economy and across the state, yet the increasing costs of higher education are affecting students' ability to pursue their degrees and even to feed their families. At Portland State, 42% of our students are food insecure according to USDA standards. Compared to the 14.6% of Oregonians who are overall food insecure (reported by Oregon Food Bank), it is difficult to deny the role that the costs of higher education is playing to influence that prevalence of college student food insecurity. Other states across the country have recognized and are leading the shift away from blaming students for the barriers that they face but instead looking at systemic causes of and solutions to the problem. (See California AB 453 and AB 2). Oregon State investment in college students is a critical piece of that puzzle, and Oregon should be part of leading this historic shift in higher education instead of leaving our students behind.

Portland State also plays a unique role among the public colleges and universities because it has historically been accessible. Our students are typically the first in their families to pursue a college degree. They are more diverse than at any other four-year institution in the state. Undergraduates often come back to get their graduate degrees because they value the education they receive here. **Please invest in Oregon by supporting a \$186M increase in public university funding, so that Portland State can continue being Oregon's Access and Success University.**

I feel the need to acknowledge recent news about PSU's current leadership. What I know is that staff and faculty are extremely invested in student success. I have seen the heart and commitment of my colleagues regardless of the ups and downs that may arise. We show up everyday to support students, so I urge you to please help us in not letting our students down.

Best regards,
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