

Thank you Chair Doherty and members of the committee for this opportunity to testify.

My name is Rachel Bayly, and I am a student at Western Oregon University. I have worked as a coordinator of our campus food pantry for over a year.

During the school year our pantry has about 200 students come in for food every month. In my role I have seen the stress students experience as they try to deal with the expenses of their education, housing, other living expenses, and items necessary for well-being such as food. Someone once pointed out to me that we are in a way driving students to compromise their physical well-being as they balance these expenses. When students miss a payment on tuition or don't pay rent on time someone is on their case— the business office sends emails, the landlord shows up at their door, but no one says anything when a student skips a meal. What does this say about our priorities as a society? WOU has committed to making students' well-being a priority.

Our food pantry is widely supported by the campus community, we are coordinating a campus-wide effort to support students in signing up for SNAP, and since 2013 we have been the top performing university in the annual Governor's Food Drive. Despite our best efforts, some students experiencing food insecurity fall through the cracks. Students don't know all the resources that are available to them. Some feel ashamed admitting that they need help and coming to the Food Pantry. Moreover, the types of services we provide through the Pantry never seem to meet the full extent of need on campus. Part of my job responsibility is securing and coordinating donations of food for the Pantry. If I quadruple the amount of food coming into the Pantry, four times the amount of food will go out to hungry students. For my position food insecurity feels like a bottomless pit. I can do my best and students still don't have the support they need to thrive in the classroom.

I see peers using the Food Pantry, who I know work on or off campus. Some have multiple jobs and are still unable to make ends meet and feed themselves and their families. It is a luxury today to be a traditional student, able to focus all your energy on studies. Students these days, as nationwide data show, need more support in meeting their basic needs.

With HB 4055 the State of Oregon can take steps to show that it prioritizes students' well-being and ensuring that students' basic needs are met, so that they can be successful in the classroom and beyond.