



Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chair Neron and Weber, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Emily Wanous and I am the Legislative Director for the Oregon Student Association. Thank you for allowing HB2907 a public hearing to share why funding the Community College Support Fund at \$702million is vital for student success, quality education and more.

In order for our community colleges to keep tuition increases at an average of 3.5% in the coming years, the State must fund the CCSF at current service level costs of \$702Million. As tuition continues to skyrocket in Oregon and more and more students are priced out of their education and future, every dollar cut from the CCSF will be put onto the student's backs in the form of increased tuition and fees. In addition to sustainable funding to the CCSF, students need dedicated revenue into the Oregon Opportunity Grant. Right now, the OOG is severely underfunded at \$164Million, which means **only 1 in 4 students who qualify for the grant actually receive it**. OSA is asking for the State to properly fund the OOG at \$290Million that would ensure students whose families make on average between zero to \$100,000 can receive the grant. Affordability in higher education must be looked at holistically if we want to create an Oregon where all who wish to attend college can do so.

When considering how Oregon will return to pre-pandemic economic levels, we need to look at higher education and the role college graduates will play in the healing process post COVID. While we are all grateful for the federal support that is coming into Oregon and to our institutions, I want to reiterate that **these funds are one time money that will be put toward pandemic response and what has been lost through this difficult year**. One time funds will not be effective when considering the long term success of our institutions. Community colleges are essential to responding to the recession brought on by COVID-19 and the wildfires of 2020, offering shorter-term programs directed at getting unemployed Oregonians retrained and back to work as quickly as possible--in all corners of our State.

As you may already know, **community colleges serve more systematically marginalized students than any other sector of higher education**; which means the need to address systemic barriers that these students face is a necessity to see them through to graduation. Such students are more likely to face basic needs insecurities, such as food and housing insecurity. The community colleges through the Pathways to Opportunity program have played a key role in connecting students to federal services, such as STEP or SNAP. With the high level of need that was present prior to the pandemic and has only exacerbated in the past year--community colleges, along with the Oregon Student Association and Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon, are committed to building onto current programs through HB2835 and through other means as well. Students see the community college's commitment to their personal success, though they recognize their institutions remain underfunded creating more barriers to overcome.

Thank you for your time and I hope this added some clarity as to why \$702Million to the CCSF is a necessity for economic prosperity post pandemic.

Sincerely,

Emily Wanous (she/her)

OSA Legislative Director

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