

Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shirley Hancock and I live in the Portland area. As a journalist and an Oregonian, I've followed your work closely for decades. I know how hard you're working and the difficult choices you face.

My purpose here, as an Oregonian and a proud graduate of the University of Oregon School of Journalism, is to thank you for your work and to respectfully request that you support robust investments in public higher education, including funding the Public University Support Fund at \$900 million, and the Oregon Opportunity Grant at \$200 million.

First, just a bit about my journey: I received a degree in journalism from the UO, with a focus on newspaper and broadcast reporting in 1980. Even during college--and this may show you how desperate local stations were for "talent"--I began reporting, then anchoring on air. After graduating, I spent over 25 years in the television news business, most of that at the CBS affiliate in Portland as an award winning anchor and reporter. In this role I helped keep Oregonians informed about their schools, communities, state government and more. I'm still telling stories, as a journalist with 1859 Oregon's Magazine and 1889 Washington's Magazine. I also help other people find and tell their own stories, through my work as a PR Consultant and speaker/media coach

None of that would be possible without the training and the real-world work experiences and mentorship I received at the University of Oregon. A well-informed community is a thriving community, and the UO's School of Journalism graduates excellent reporters, broadcast journalists, and other professionals who inform and educate the people of our state.

Funding for Oregon's public universities creates opportunities for all Oregon students, and it has never been more critical. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities for BIPOC, lower-income, and rural students. It is critical that colleges and universities have adequate resources to address these disparities and ensure that all students have access to opportunity.

Access to opportunity doesn't end with funding for public universities. It's also important that our state makes meaningful investments in student financial aid programs. The Oregon Opportunity Grant is Oregon's only state-funded, need-based grant program for college students. Approximately 40,000 students receive Opportunity Grants each year, yet funding limitations have meant that the grant is not available to thousands more students who demonstrate significant financial need. Funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant should be increased in order to provide a realistic possibility of college affordability for Oregon's lower- and middle-income students.

Thank you for serving our community. I hope and pray you'll prioritize funding for public education so that all students have opportunities to succeed, thrive, and give back to our beautiful state.

Sincerely,

Shirley Hancock
Portland, Oregon