

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to ask for your support in fully funding community colleges in Oregon, at the \$702 million level (HB2907). My name is Jennifer Boehmer and I have spent the past 20 years working on behalf of Oregon's community colleges, and currently work for the LBCC Foundation -- the community-driven, nonprofit organization that is dedicated to helping the people of Linn and Benton County find a road to success. In my role, I see first-hand how critical an affordable pathway to high-quality education is for our community. This year, we were able to raise a record number of community donations for students seeking emergency services and scholarships in order to stay in school. The outpouring of kindness and support from our community was so inspiring. And yet, we also saw a record number of students seeking assistance -- in fact, five times the number of students that our nonprofit is able to support. Clearly, the pandemic has created a dire situation for so many families in Oregon...I am thinking of an LBCC student named Jillian, who is the first in her family to dream of graduating from college. With four children under the age of 8, she was somehow working, and pursuing a degree in healthcare and getting As in all of her classes... and yet, when her factory job closed due to a Covid-19 outbreak, she had to make some even tougher choices. We KNOW what it takes to help Jillian rebound, and we were able to help her. But if community colleges are not fully funded, services will be cut and tuition will increase. How many Jillian's will we leave behind if we don't offer Oregonians an accessible, high-quality educational path to a better life? Simply put, we need community colleges now more than ever. I ask that you support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Jennifer Boehmer  
Executive Director,  
Linn-Benton Community College Foundation