

Hello members of the ways and means committee,

My name is Jennifer Cuthers and I am a student at Lane Community College working towards a degree in Business. Today I am asking for you to invest \$290 M in the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the state's largest need based financial aid program.

I receive the Oregon Opportunity Grant. The strain on myself and my family of paying for school during this pandemic is immense. In order to afford tuition and fees, textbooks, rent, and food I am forced to make sacrifices in order to repay my loans when I get out of school, such as cutting down my food budget and general living expenses in order to save and get by.

The impact on my education of this economic reality is that I will not be able to pursue a Bachelor's degree because I cannot afford it. The cost of living and increasing gap in higher education funding makes it impossible to afford pursuing school.

Right now, over $\frac{3}{4}$ of Oregon students who qualify for and need the Oregon Opportunity Grant do not receive it, purely due to severe underfunding. If Oregon is going to recover from COVID-19, it is vital that we invest in student aid so that students can afford to finish degrees and find good paying jobs after school. Now is a critical time to get the state where it needs to be regarding financial aid access.

Please remember my story as you work with your colleagues to set the budget for the next biennium, and please invest \$290 M in the Oregon Opportunity Grant. Thank you.