

Hello Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am here on behalf of the Oregon Student Association to voice the necessity of the critical funding of the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the Public University Support Fund, and the Community College Fund.

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. In fact, as many of you may know Oregon spends about 30% less per student on state financial aid than the national average while leading states spend two to four times as much per student as Oregon, this fact is deeply upsetting and sends an unclear message to students about how much our state values their education. We are asking for an investment of \$290M for the Oregon Opportunity Grant for the 21-23 biennium. This will ensure that there is enough money to fund students whose household income is from \$0 to \$100,000

Along with the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the Public University Support Fund is just as critical. An investment of \$900 million in the PUSF will shield students from significant tuition increases and help maintain academic advisors and other wrap-around services for students. I know that I have had to make hard calls on food, rent, and classes when my tuition continues to rise and I simply can't keep up. And I am not the only one, of the 130,000 students that enroll at Oregon's public universities. 1 in 5 are first generation students, 2 in 5 receive need-based grants, and 3 in 5 are unable to meet expenses. This 900 million for the Public University Support Fund is needed to make sure we can support students from diverse backgrounds in allowing them to gain an education without having to sacrifice everything else.

We also ask you to support the funding of 702 million dollars for the community college support fund. When I was 9, my dad decided to go to Clackamas community college to get his degree in horticulture, and as a result is able to work a job that helps my family from financial disparity. Community colleges are key to making sure that all people are able to access both education, and the opportunities that come with it. 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. Not to mention

Community colleges serve more systematically marginalized students than any other sector of higher education and many of these students face barriers made worse by the pandemic and wildfires and the shift to virtual education, and the impact of these catastrophic events has prevented many from enrolling. An entire cohort of students could be left behind by this pandemic if we do not address the challenges they face. Your decision on this has real impact. Every dollar cut from the Community College Support Fund must be made up by raising tuition or cutting programs and services, moving educational opportunities out of the reach of the

Oregonians with the most need. We have a responsibility to show these students we value the hard work they put into obtaining education by funding the community college support fund.

Budgets are tight right now for the legislator, and I understand and respect that, but budgets for students are even tighter. Going into these next couple's years as we rebuild from this pandemic, I deplore you to think about what our society and Oregonians need to be supported so that we can get back to and improve upon the world as we knew it last March. A key step in this rebuilding is investing in education so all students can continue and begin their post-secondary education no matter what financial losses or inequalities that faced during this last year and will continue to face in the years ahead. These inequalities can be curbed by the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the Public University Support Fund, and the Community College Fund, and so we need them in order to rebuild a better state.