

DATE: April 21, 2021

Subject: Community College funding

To: Sen. Betsy Johnson, Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Rep. Dan Rayfield and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

April is National Community College Month, and I want to make sure that you support the great work of Oregon's community colleges. I'm urging you to support \$702 million in funding for community colleges.

Tuition and college debt are already unaffordable for too many families, particularly those impacted the most by the pandemic and wildfires, including Clackamas Community College students. Federal stimulus funds are short-term dollars to support innovative programs stemming from the pandemic, while colleges will still need long-term funding from the state to continue to support students and Oregon's economic recovery in the coming years.

In the 2019-2021 biennium, the Community College Support Fund received \$641 million. To fully fund current services, colleges need a state appropriation of \$702 million for the 2021-2023 biennium. Every dollar cut from the Community College Support Fund must be made up by raising tuition or cutting programs and services. By fully funding community colleges we are able to provide Oregonians with the resources needed to support their success, and in keeping tuition low we ensure more equitable access to education for all, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Community colleges change lives—it has been my honor to witness this firsthand while supporting students during my 20-year career at Clackamas Community College. So many Oregonians look to our community colleges to help them change the trajectory of their family history and improve their future opportunities through education and training—seeking living wage jobs, the opportunity to make a difference in the community, and for some a newfound belief in themselves. COVID-19 and the wildfires of 2020 have been devastating for so many Oregonians. Community colleges are even more essential than ever in responding to the recession brought on, offering shorter-term programs directed at getting unemployed Oregonians retrained and back to work as quickly as possible.

Community colleges serve students regardless of education and skill level, providing a true educational safety net and primary access point to economic opportunity. Community colleges like CCC need adequate funding from the state to continue providing valuable education in high-demand industries. It makes sense for our students, it makes sense for businesses, and it makes sense for the economy. Please support \$702 million in funding for community colleges.

Please make community college funding a priority this legislative session. Thank you.

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