



**Emily Wanous**

OSA Legislative Director

[emily@orstudents.org](mailto:emily@orstudents.org)

(541) 240-1432

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and members of the Senate Education committee,

For the record, my name is Emily Wanous and I am the Legislative Director for the Oregon Student Association. I am here today in support of SB 849, which would establish basic needs navigators on Oregon's university and college campuses.

Prior to COVID, there were 448K adults in Oregon who were working or unemployed and making less than \$15 an hour who needed resources and support to access a college education. That reality has only grown. 99% of jobs coming out of the last recession went to someone with a college certificate or degree. The pressure to have education beyond high school is mounting and basic need insecurities are growing--with disproportionate impacts on BIPOC students, parenting students and many rural communities. If we want better completion rates we have to address these larger, underlying issues.

The concept of this bill came directly from student feedback. All of the organizations and institutions that are present today have been working hard to address student basic needs. There is a lot of good work happening on campuses to support students, but it is not enough. A benefits navigator that holds institutional knowledge while providing crucial resource support would mean students would have one point of access for all of their needs, reducing the amount of time they need to search for resources, and giving them more time to concentrate on their studies.

The fiscal for this bill is \$5 million for the biennium, these funds would pay for a full time basic needs navigator on every public community college and university in Oregon. A small portion of these funds would go toward a consortium of benefits navigators to develop best practices. As you will hear today basic needs navigators are critical for student success.

For more data and information, I would encourage committee members to read the submitted testimony from Hunger Free Oregon for a more indepth look into basic needs and insecurities among the student population.

**Thank you for your time and I welcome any questions or comments.**