

Dear Chairs and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Rowan Mathews and I was a student from University of Oregon. I am here today to ask for your full funding support for SB849. SB849 would formally establish basic needs navigators at public institutions of higher education across the state. In Oregon, we know there are about 41% of students who were food insecure in 2020.

Two years ago, I was the Director of Legislative Affairs at ASCOCC in Bend. We, as an organization, had been responsible for maintaining and running the foodbank on our campuses. Given our budget and our campus climate, we had a student government of six people of various particular responsibilities. Our Internal Affairs Coordinator was tagged to our food banks, alongside our Campus Affairs Coordinator, who was additionally tagged to our Madras, Prineville and Redmond campus needs. We had over twenty people signing in for foodbags a week, just on our Bend campus. Every three weeks or so we would attempt to get as much as possible on our shoestring budget to take care of the students on our four campuses. All of us worked outside of our normal hours in order to attempt this, often running into Executive leadership discussing budgets past midnight. Some of us even relied on the foodbank for our households.

We as students, have to live with food scarcity and burnout to attempt to take care of each other. A staff position dedicated to aiding in SNAP benefits would not just ease that burden but allow us to do more for our schools and communities.

A Basic Needs Navigator for COCC and UO would be a huge help in making sure students have access to food and housing, so they can be successful in higher education. I urge the committees to support funding for SB849.

Thank you for your time
Rowan Mathews