

Co-Chairs Frederick, McLain, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alina Wei and I live in Eugene, Oregon. I am currently a student at the University of Oregon. I respectfully request that you support robust investments in public higher education, including funding the Public University Support Fund at \$900 million, and the Oregon Opportunity Grant at \$200 million.

Funding for Oregon's public universities creates opportunities for all Oregon students, and it is more critical now than ever. As a lower-income Asian American student, I understand how beneficial these funds are in supporting lower-income and BIPOC students. Often, we are predisposed to believe that pursuing and achieving higher education is unobtainable. It is financial aid and support programs that effectively encouraged us to attend and complete college.

The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities for BIPOC, lower-income, and rural students. It is critical that colleges and universities have adequate resources to address these disparities and ensure that all students have access to opportunity.

Our public universities and colleges have played an important role in addressing the pandemic. Reduced funding would challenge UO's ability to continue providing the fast, efficient, and accurate research and testing required to ensure our state's equitable recovery.

The OOG is Oregon's largest state-funded, need-based grant program for college students. It is the state's only need-based aid program. Approximately 40,000 students receive Opportunity Grants each year. Funding for the OOG should be increased in order to provide a realistic possibility of college affordability for Oregon's low- and middle-income students.

Thank you for serving our community. I know you will be forced to make tough budget decisions this session, and I hope you will prioritize funding for public education.

Sincerely,

Alina Wei
University of Oregon, Class of 2022