
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

May 10, 2021

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon (PPAO) respectfully requests that the committee support the investments of \$900 million in the Public University Support Fund and \$200 million in the Oregon Opportunity Grant as included within SB 5528, the proposed budget for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Robust funding for public education at all levels – including higher education – is a necessary component of building an equitable plan to help Oregon and Oregonians recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and recession. Our state’s public universities provide pathways to opportunity for BIPOC, lower- and middle-income, immigrant, rural, and first-generation college students and play an important role in advancing racial, gender, and economic equity.

The ability to attend college and complete a degree has numerous benefits in terms of health and well-being. Higher education can help people secure better-paying jobs with fewer safety hazards, and income from these employment opportunities may have a positive impact on health by increasing the ability to meet basic needs, including accessing better healthcare coverage and securing stable, safe, housing that is free from contaminants and irritants.¹ Additionally, higher education levels have been correlated with increased access to and use of preventive care services, such as flu shots, vaccines, mammograms, pap smears, and colonoscopies.²

Furthermore, Oregon’s public universities are key partners in the delivery of healthcare, including sexual and reproductive healthcare. University health centers across the state offer sexual and reproductive healthcare services to students, as well as compassionate services for survivors of sexual assault. Our public universities and colleges have also played an important role in addressing the pandemic. Reduced funding would challenge the ability of our public universities to continue providing fast, efficient, and accurate research, testing, and vaccination events that support the state’s COVID-19 efforts.

Funding for Oregon’s public universities creates opportunities for all Oregon students, and it is more critical now than ever. 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 in meaningful and systemic ways.

In addition to funding our public universities, our state must invest in student financial aid to ensure that all students have a fair shot. Oregon currently ranks near the bottom for funding for student financial aid. That must change to ensure that our BIPOC, lower- and middle-income, and rural students have the ability to attend college.

PPAO respectfully urges the committee’s support for funding higher education and investing in a prosperous future for Oregon and its students.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

¹ HealthyPeople.gov, <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/enrollment-in-higher>

² Cutler David, Lleras-Muney Adriana. *Understanding Differences in Health Behaviors by Education*. UCLA, Dept. Econ; 2007. Manuscript.