



February 11, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of OR, we respectfully request your support for House Bill 2835.

Attending college has become increasingly challenging for Oregon's young people, but it is even more so for those young people who don't have sufficient resources to be admitted and remain in our community college system. Many of these students are also serving as parents or taking care of other family members at the same time they are doing their best to obtain an education.

Education provides opportunities to create more employment opportunities, secure higher incomes, develop problem solving skills, provide life satisfaction, create equal opportunities and a chance to give back.<sup>1</sup> They also foster economic development.

The significance of these students' needs is well established. A #RealCollege survey<sup>2</sup> of approximately 8,1000 students from 14 of the 17 Oregon community colleges in 2019 found that:

- 41% of respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days
- 52% of respondents were housing insecure in the previous year
- 20% of respondents were homeless in the previous year

These figures are appalling and cannot be countenanced.

The #RealCollege report also found that the students most significantly impacted by these needs were American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Indigenous students; Black students; those identifying as nonbinary or transgender; and those who are former foster youth or returning citizens.

Programs such as Oregon's Pathways to Opportunity, the Oregon Community College STEP Consortia and others have commendably attempted to help low-income students succeed. These and other efforts are, however, insufficient to respond to the level of need experienced by today's many community college students.

Navigating the world of SNAP, TANF, ERDC, employment etc. benefits is also a complicated enterprise. Given the breadth of students' needs, community colleges must have staff who know the ins and outs of these benefits, the forms that need to be filed, the deadlines and more. They

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<sup>1</sup> Habitat for Humanity of Broward, January 20, 2020, <https://www.habitatbroward.org/benefits-of-education/>

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Community Colleges #RealCollege Survey, April 2020 Revised, [https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019\\_OregonCC\\_Report\\_v2.pdf](https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019_OregonCC_Report_v2.pdf)

need staff who are solely dedicated to expertly and efficiently handle these programs.

We cannot allow the lack of resources to hinder the growth of our young people. It isn't fair to them and it will only hinder Oregon's economic prosperity.

Respectfully,

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