

February 17, 2021



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ASWOU PRESIDENT

Werner University Center #122 | 345 Monmouth Ave. N. | Monmouth, OR 97361

Dear Chair Evans, Vice Chair Lewis, Vice Chair Meek, and Members of the Committee,

My name is N.J. Johnson and I am serving as the student body president of Western Oregon University for the 2020-21 academic year. I am writing to urge a "No" vote on HB 2237, which would direct the Office of Emergency Management to create and maintain a roster of individuals available for temporary emergency-related work.

In the challenging time period we find ourselves in, I understand the importance of broadening statewide preparation for inevitable future emergencies. However, as the representative voice of the WOU student body, I have major concerns with targeting students who rely on financial aid to afford their education as the sole criteria for mandating these courses. As it is, 3 of 4 students who qualify for the Oregon Opportunity Grant are not able to receive the aid they need to afford their education. This bill would add yet another barrier to accessing financial aid and in turn, education opportunities for Oregon students.

Additionally, Oregon students who rely on need and merit-based financial aid are often low income students who work part or full time jobs in order to pay for their education and living expenses. Adding another time commitment to their academic and work schedules for the sole reason that they rely on financial aid is inexcusable. Simply put, there are better solutions to the noble concerns HB 2237 aims to address.

Emergency preparedness is a vital investment of Oregon's time, resources, and coordination. However, I urge the members of this committee to consider alternative, more equitable mechanisms to create a more prepared Oregon than the solution proposed in HB 2237. Thank you very much for your work and consideration.

N.J. Johnson

ASWOU President

aswoupresident@mail.wou.edu

(503) 838 - 8555