

# Oregon's Statewide Textbook Affordability Program

## Testimony for the House Interim Committee On Higher Education

January 11, 2024

Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Ruiz and McIntire, and members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Amy Hofer, Statewide Open Education Program Director with Open Oregon Educational Resources.

Open Oregon Educational Resources is our statewide textbook affordability program. We promote textbook affordability for community college and university students and facilitate widespread adoption of open, low-cost, high-quality materials. You can visit the [openoregon.org](https://openoregon.org) website for more information showcasing what's happening across the state.

As you heard, we have a problem: textbooks cost so much that students can't afford to buy them. Research shows that unaffordable textbooks limit student success and increase student debt.<sup>1</sup>

Here are a few of the things that the statewide textbook affordability program does to address the problem.

- Oregon is a national leader in open education because of our well-developed community of practice.
- We regularly offer professional development and grant opportunities for faculty to support innovative course redesign with no-cost and low-cost course materials.
- And we offer policy support. We work with each community college and university to implement legislative requirements and assess their impacts.

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<sup>1</sup> [Small Dollar Amounts Are Significant](#)

Since Oregon started investing in textbook affordability in 2015, we have seen measurable success, including \$23M in student savings from our grant program<sup>2</sup> and a steep reduction in the cost of course materials for transfer degrees and general education requirements.<sup>3</sup> Our evidence shows that support for affordable course materials is effective and high-impact because spending on textbook affordability has a multiplier effect such that each dollar in state funding spent continues to generate student savings year after year.

However, there is still much more that we want to do. The state investment in our program has been flat since 2019. With \$1M in one-time funding in Year 2 of the current biennium, we can:

- Expand our grant program at ~\$12 in student savings per \$1 spent
- Expand professional development for faculty at up to ~\$50 in student savings per \$1 spent
- Leverage the momentum of our existing community of practice to provide more on-ramps for new participants.

One-time funds will help us right now, and I'll be back in 2025 advocating for an ongoing program funding increase as recommended by the Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education. Financial aid rarely stretches to cover course materials, so funding for affordable textbooks is an essential component of a comprehensive statewide affordability strategy.

Thank you for your time!

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<sup>2</sup> [Continuing Savings from Past OER Grants \(Third Report\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Six Years of Community College Cost Savings: Impact of statewide funding for textbook affordability](#) and [Two Year Followup: Course material costs for four-year degrees at Oregon's universities](#)