



American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

Senator Meek, Chair
Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

May 31, 2023

Re: Senate Bill 774 and Senate Joint Resolution 26 - Support

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Boquist, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the more than 6,300 members of the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, our collective bargaining chapters at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, Oregon State University, and Oregon Institute of Technology, and our faculty members across Oregon, I ask that you please support SB 774 and SJR 26.

Oregon's institutions of higher education are in crisis, and the cause is clear. Our state is 45th in the nation for higher education funding, and as state support for higher education evaporated, university administrators sought budgetary savings by slashing staff and faculty wages and positions. Worse still, the burden to fund our universities has too frequently been borne by our students through increasing tuition costs and decreasing levels of services and support. The result of these legislative and administrative choices is ballooning student debt, declining enrollments, and increasing barriers to student success.

SB 774 and SJR 26 create an avenue for Oregonians to recommit to public education and a host of other high-priority issues that have been allowed to fall into disrepair. The reality is that the kicker has long outlived its usefulness, and there would be no budget crisis in the state of Oregon if we did not manufacture one each biennium through this well-meaning, but short-sighted refund to our state's taxpayers. Oregonians deserve the chance to kick the kicker and commit those funds to the collective good. In so doing, we can aggressively engage the many challenges facing our state.

Thank you for your consideration,
Victor Reyes
Director, AAUP Oregon