

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruiz, Vice Chair McIntire, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Stacie Williams, I am faculty and department chair for Communication Studies at Portland Community College (PCC), and I am submitting written testimony in support of HB 3121 with the -1 Amendment that will help make critical investments in Open Oregon Educational Resources, Oregon's statewide textbook affordability program.

As a teacher, I have experienced a transformation in the way my students and I are engaged when using Open Education Resources (OER). I am able to select content for students to read that is specific to our course outcomes instead of requiring my students to purchase a textbook that is designed for a broad national audience. This means the reading is more meaningful and salient, the content can be customized to use examples and experiences that better reflect the diverse identities of my students, and most importantly I can teach students to be deeper critical thinkers by asking them to critique our OER and/or offer suggestions for topics that should be addressed in future versions.

If you are thinking that OER sounds like an ideal way to teach and learn... I agree. So what is the barrier to OER being more widely adopted? Funding. When I decided to first try OER in my Public Speaking class I needed to spend time finding OER materials to use, piece them together in a way that meets the outcomes of my course, and format the materials in a way that would be easy for students to use. This was about a 100 hour investment. Textbook publishers pay authors and editors to create and refine work in large part because it is time intensive. OER is also time intensive, but the end product is free to students.

When OER projects can be funded, a small amount of faculty can accomplish this work and share it out with others, significantly multiplying the savings for students. The textbook that most faculty at Portland Community College were using cost on average \$80. And because of the textbook industry's move towards digitizing their materials, used books cannot be purchased or sold back to the college bookstore. As someone who was a very low income, first generation college student I can say that every dollar really matters. When it came time to purchase textbooks I had to make the calculation of whether or not I would have gas money to get to campus, the ability to buy groceries, or enough money to pay for utilities. So when my students tell me that providing them with a free OER made a huge difference, I know first hand what that means.

When the pandemic hit, faculty in my department were looking for ways to provide as much support to students as possible. I am pleased to say nearly every Public Speaking class offered at PCC now uses a free OER. And that OER was available to all faculty because of an OER grant I received from Open Oregon in 2016. In Winter term of 2023, 33 sections of Public Speaking are using free OER materials. That is roughly \$35,000 students have saved in just one term from a \$1,500 grant in 2016.

I will close by highlighting that strategically integrated higher education work in Oregon could be bolstered through additional OER funding. The state work around Common Course Numbering (CCN) because of SB 233 and funding OER projects for the aligned courses seems like a very helpful way to provide specifically aligned learning materials that can support achievement of learning outcomes. Such OER work would have an incredibly high impact because the CCN work is targeting classes most often transferred. Educators have lots of creative ideas about integrating work on large statewide initiatives and legislation. And we have lots of ideas about creating, remixing, and using OER. What we lack is financial support.

I hope through all of the testimony that you hear and read for HB 3121, you will come to see funding OER projects as a way to directly impact students' pocketbooks and livelihood.

Thank you for your time, and I hope that I can count on your support of HB 3121 with the -1 Amendment.