

## **Written Testimony for HB 3499**

Thank you Chairs and Committee Members for holding this hearing on the future affordability of higher education in Oregon. Thank you also to Representative Chaichi and Staff.

It is my work as a teacher in a college preparation program for First Generation College Students in a local school district that brought me here.

I am Mary McGinnis. I taught in the Tillamook School District for 9 years out of the last 12 years directing a program to prepare first generation college students, mostly students of lower income, and minority students for college. Of course, living in a coastal rural community meant my students from low income families had to leave their homes to seek most higher education.

My students prepared themselves well. I taught dual high school college credit classes with Portland Community College and Western Oregon University. My students enrolled in these and other dual credit classes with the local community college. I started a local program of the national Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) high school college preparation program, and they enrolled in it.

I took the students on school sponsored college visits to almost every community college in Oregon and to several Oregon universities. Some of these college tours were overnight/weekend college tours to allow students to more fully understand the college experience.

I went with the students and their parents to look for student housing near their colleges of interest. We knocked on a lot of apartment doors and looked at many Craigslist rental listings.

My students worked hard, holding part time jobs all through high school to pay current and college expenses.

They applied for every scholarship they could.

They had goals of becoming teachers, nurses, biologists, working in the veterinarian and IT fields, among many other of Oregon's desperately needed occupations.

In the end, many of my students did not go to college.

What stopped these brilliant, hardworking, well prepared young high school graduates from going to college?

They stopped when I sat with them and their families to create a budget and a financial plan to pay for college.

It is not just the cost of tuition and fees that drive up college. Housing, transportation, and food and other items contribute to the cost.

The alternative for my students was to take out college loans and graduate with \$30,000 to \$50,000 in student debt.

Higher education is often necessary to learn the skills to fill many of Oregon's jobs. It is a necessity. It is, however, becoming increasingly inaccessible to a large group of people.

This means they have less opportunity to improve their lives and to leave the poverty they were born into.

Today, I work with and support adults who want to return to or start college. I also work with my former students who started college, but didn't complete because of soaring costs. Even after dropping out of college, they still have career goals and are trying to re-enter college despite even more increasing costs.

HB 3499 is needed to help people move people into careers that will both benefit them personally and Oregon's economy. HB3499 has the potential to change Oregon's landscape of people working in the economy.

Thank you for holding this hearing,

Mary McGinnis