

April 8, 2023

Joint Committee Ways and Means  
Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: Please support full funding for SB5506**

Co-Chairs Steiner, Sanchez, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Vera Sell and I live in Portland Oregon. I am a graduate of Portland State University's school of Business (2006) and am now teaching at PSU as an adjunct instructor. As you are making important budget decisions this legislative session, I encourage you to support Oregon's students through robust investments in public higher education, including funding the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) at \$1.05 billion and increasing the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) by \$200 million.

*As a graduate I have seen firsthand the impact an education can make on personal financial well-being as well as the local economy. I have worked in the technology industry where I contributed to business growth and subsequent hiring. In that capacity I sponsored student projects and helped graduates from Oregon universities get placed for internships and full time positions.*

*I now teach as an adjunct professor at the School of Business at Portland State University. Many students can only afford to attend university thanks to scholarships and student aid. One of my students last year was struggling because she did not qualify for financial aid. She had to take on additional shifts at work in order to make ends meet, which impacted her ability to perform to her abilities in class. It was heart wrenching to see a bright, intelligent woman seeking to advance her career in technology but having to make trade-offs between putting food on the table and finishing an assignment for my class.*

*I am now a sole proprietor and have built a business in the state. Something that my degree and continued affiliation with Portland State have enabled.*

Oregon ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in the country for per-student, state funding of public universities and invests less than half the national average in financial aid per public university student. As Oregon's students and workforce continue to face lasting impacts from the pandemic, we must ensure that higher education is more attainable for every student.

Funding for Oregon's public universities creates opportunities for all Oregon students, and it is more critical now than ever. After multiple years of pandemic-related challenges, students have greater needs than ever before. It is critical for the state to support wraparound services such as financial aid, academic support, career development, and basic needs support – including

food and housing assistance through Benefits Navigators – to meet the growing needs of our increasingly diverse student bodies.

A \$1.05 billion budget will allow public universities to continue offering education and services for students without increasing tuition beyond 5 percent at most universities.

***If we don't continue funding universities, we may risk taking out the "Public" out of our public higher education institutions.***

Thank you for your service to our state and thank you for supporting Oregon's students and public higher education institutions.

Sincerely,

Vera Sell  
Clearsight Marketing, LLC