

ATTN: Oregon State Legislature

My name is Javi Estrada. I am a current student and candidate for the Surgical Technology program at Mt. Hood Community College. I am also the Vice President of our student government program, the Associated Students of Mt. Hood Community College. I moved to Oregon spring of 2021, with the intention of studying science and medicine. During my first year living in the great state of Oregon, I worked full-time as a professional mover. I met many fascinating Oregonians and traveled to various cities around the Portland area. As a professional mover, I learned the importance of hard labor, logistics, teamwork, and customer service. In the spring of 2022, I enrolled at MHCC and started taking courses that would prepare me for the allied health professions program known as Surgical Technology. Unfortunately, in March of that year I was the victim of domestic violence. My former roommate turned out to be an uncontrollable menace. Thankfully, the student basic needs department at MHCC saved me from that life-threatening environment. They provided me access to affordable housing in downtown Portland through College Housing Northwest. They have also provided me with emergency funding every term that I have been a student at MHCC. Despite the challenges that I have faced, I have persevered. And with the help of the student basic needs department at my college, I am still here.

On behalf of the student body of Mt. Hood Community College, I implore you to invest in emergency funding for public colleges. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission has recommended that the state invest \$205,000,000 of the 2023-2025 biennial budget, in order to cover the increased costs for community colleges. This funding will ensure that students like me are able to afford tuition, books, housing, food, and other student basic needs. MHCC is home to many career and technical education programs. Graduates of these programs go on to be: automotive technology specialists, business managers, computer game designers, criminal justice administrators, cyber security specialists, dental hygienists, early childhood educators, emergency medical technicians, engineers, fisheries technicians, fitness and athletics professionals, funeral services practitioners, integrated media specialists, integrated metals technologists, mechatronics technicians, medical assistants, medical office specialists, mental health/social service/addiction counselors, natural resources technologists, physical therapists, registered nurses, respiratory care specialists, and surgical technologists. We are the future. We may be students today, but once we graduate, we will be work professionals that generate money for the state. Invest in the higher education of college students statewide, and we will pay it forward.