

April 17, 2023

Dear Chair Steiner, Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee:

I am Earlene Camarillo an Associate Professor of Politics, Policy, and Administration at Western Oregon University. I am testifying today in support of \$1.05 billion appropriation for higher education in Oregon, and importantly, at least a \$15 million support fund for Oregon's Regional Universities.

Western Oregon University has an incredible group of faculty and staff who are passionate about helping Oregon students succeed and who go above and beyond normal job expectations to provide our students with life changing educational opportunities. Right now, Oregon's Regional Universities are suffering from catastrophic funding shortfalls, leading to further deep cuts to faculty and staff positions. These cuts threaten program offerings, cannibalize our institutions, and make our efforts to revitalize impossible. Students can't succeed when administrators cut faculty and staff positions and fail to invest in programs and services.

My program, for example, is losing one of only two faculty qualified to teach the core courses in one of our majors to retirement and because of the budget crisis that faculty line is not scheduled to be replaced. While a temporary non-tenure track replacement will allow us to offer required courses students need, non-permanent faculty members lack the stability needed to cultivate successful and enduring collaborations that support the continued success of our students and our programs. As the job market in my field is thriving, highly qualified non-permanent faculty tend to move on quickly to more permanent positions. Whenever a faculty member leaves, students lose an important connection, creating instability and fracturing their system of support. As WOU serves many Oregon students who are first generation and from historically marginalized communities, lasting connections with their faculty members are crucial to not only retention but to their success during and after their tenure at WOU. Additionally, losing exceptional temporary faculty means that we must continually redirect resources towards the hiring process, rather than on student-success and program development activities. With additional funding, we can secure faculty and frontline service jobs at our institutions, increase service levels that promote student success, and promote sustainable growth for our institutions. Our students' success depends on strong funding right now, not on a rainy-day fund.

Faculty at my institution, alongside fellow regional universities (EOU/OIT/SOU) are united in our commitment to Oregon's future. I urgently ask that Oregon commit \$15 million dollars to supporting our Regional Universities.

Sincerely,

Earlene Camarillo, PhD, MPA
Associate Professor of Politics, Policy, and Administration