

Submitter: William Mullen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5025

April 18, 2023

Co-Chair Sen. Frederick

Co-Chair Rep. McClain

Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

Oregon State Capitol

900 Court St. NE

Salem, OR 97301

Der Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain and the members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education,

I am writing on behalf of Willamette University, the oldest university in the West, and the first university in Oregon to strongly support the initiative to increase the minimum investment of the Oregon Opportunity Grant for the 2023-25 biennium to \$400 million. We believe that increasing this grant is an important step to enabling more Oregonians of modest means to both attend an in-state university, but more importantly, to complete a degree.

At Willamette, we have been doing our part to improve access to higher education. We reduced our tuition in 2021 and significantly increased our financial aid, investing more than \$15 million in institutional aid from our endowment and other internal funding sources. We have also been actively fundraising with donors to provide more aid to students from all parts of Oregon to make a Willamette education affordable and achievable. But it is not enough.

As we have seen in recent years, middle-class students from Oregon who are just outside of Pell Grant eligibility, receive virtually no state or federal support, with the exception of Direct Stafford Loans. All funding for these students comes from internal sources, which limits our ability to increase access for our in-state students. Additional funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant will enable us to provide additional funding and access to better serve motivated and talented students from our home state.

With our multiple campuses in Portland at the Pacific Northwest College of Art and in Salem at our historic campus across the street from this state capitol, we educate a more diverse student body than any of our private college peers in the Pacific

Northwest. We also have one of the highest four-year graduation rates in Oregon for students earning Bachelor's degrees. Improvements to the Oregon Opportunity Grant will help us continue to advance our mission of educating diverse students of varying economic backgrounds in a reasonable timeframe.

Private universities in California and Washington State have benefitted from in-state, need-based grants for many years, and we have seen them expand their support to allow more of their resident students of modest means to enroll, graduate and become leaders in their respective states. We now ask the Oregon State Legislature to do the same. Willamette has a legacy of producing leaders that have profoundly impacted the State of Oregon. Please help us continue this legacy by increasing the funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

Sincerely,

William Mullen
Vice President of Enrollment Management
Willamette University