



April 18, 2023

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

My name is Dr. Rebecca Williams, Ed.D., MDR, MPP and I am an Assistant Professor at Southern Oregon University. I am testifying today in support of a \$1.05 billion appropriation for higher education in Oregon, and importantly the \$15 million-dollar support fund for Oregon's Regional Universities requested in the Governor's Budget.

Southern Oregon University provides life-changing educational opportunities to our region and our rural communities. We serve a large number of first-generation college students who desire a small liberal arts environment where consistent mentoring and advising help them to achieve their dreams, and program and certificate(s) driven toward their career.

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 these funding shortfalls force administrators cut faculty and staff positions and fail to invest in programs and services to serve our wide region from Roseburg to the Coast and Oregon's southern and eastern borders, plus the increasing number of out-of-state students.

Five years ago, we had more students enrolled overall in the university let alone in the School of Business. Students used to have one job to help them with expenses and now students are holding down two jobs to be able to afford living expenses and college tuition. Our department alone has lost five positions in the funding cuts which means a reduction in offering 45 courses a year. Our students have less selection in their educators, the influences and network connections those educators provide, and the class offerings that provide added value to the well-rounded career preparation these students need. SOU receives less money per student than any other Oregon college or university and we provide deep mentoring and career preparation to returning adult learners and first-time college students that need more connection and guidance to support their learning.

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 a strong university and college funding model right now and in the future. I have lived in Oregon since 1980, and the state has always stood for education prek-20. Oregon needs to demonstrate support for education not just in words, but in action through budget allocation. I have my doctorate in Education and my Masters in Public Policy, I understand the many demands and requests for budgetary allocations.

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

Thank you for your time.

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