

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

My name is Alma Rosa Alvarez, and I am a Professor of English at Southern Oregon University. I urge you to support the \$1.05 billion appropriation for higher education in Oregon, and more importantly the \$15 million dollar support fund for Oregon's Regional Universities requested in the Governor's Budget.

I have worked at Southern Oregon University for almost twenty-seven years. This has given me the opportunity to see my students grow into business leaders, teachers, non-profit directors, grant writers, media producers, speech pathologists, publishers, editors, and writers. I know that Southern Oregon University provides our students with educational opportunities that change their personal lives. Their transformed lives positively affect our region and our region's economy.

When I first came to Southern Oregon University, 70% of our funding came from the Oregon state legislature. Over the years, our funding has decreased, propelling us into a cycle of tuition hikes. Ultimately, these processes have led to budget shortfalls. When I first arrived at SOU, I was one of fifteen tenured/tenure-track faculty in the English Department. Due to two previous budget cuts, and the current realignment, our department now consists of four faculty. We are scrambling to ensure that our students have sufficient courses to complete the English major. In addition, the budget cuts have affected all forms of operations. This year we went from a team of four financial aid officers to two. Yet we have more students on financial aid because a university education, due to tuition hikes, has become cost prohibitive. Even keeping our campus clean is a challenge. Our janitor services were cut to a minimum so that only common spaces were cleaned. In the last five years, no one ever cleaned the floors of our offices. Periodically, on a weekend, I would bring a mop and a bucket, to ensure that what I presented to our students and prospective students and their families was our best face forward. I am not ashamed of doing this, but it feels like everything is hanging by a string.

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. The ability for our region to thrive socially and economically, depends on strong funding.

We faculty at SOU, EOU, OIT, and WOU are united in our commitment to Oregon's future. Please commit \$15 million dollars to supporting our regional universities. All of Oregon stands to benefit.

Sincerely,

Alma Rosa Alvarez, Ph.D.
Professor of English
Southern Oregon University
alvarez@sou.edu