

Submitter: Saby Waraich

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5025

Dear Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, and Members of the Committee,

I am in support of House Bill 5025, which seeks to address the funding gap faced by Oregon's community colleges.

Community colleges offer affordable, high-quality education for all skill levels, particularly for those facing barriers to post-secondary education. Presently, \$855 million is needed to maintain existing services, programs, and staffing due to inflation, supply shortages, and pandemic impacts. This level of funding will enable community colleges to maintain many critical programs and services, even though some reductions will still be required.

Reduced funding forces tuition hikes or program cuts, making education less accessible to needy Oregonians. Increased tuition means more loans or longer work hours for students, hindering their education. Community colleges serve more systematically marginalized students and have experienced a surge in demand for mental health and wraparound services during the pandemic.

Oregon's 17 community colleges educate more students than any of the other higher education sectors combined, serving all Oregon industries. The majority of community college students don't enroll directly from high school, and the colleges have multiple missions that include adult basic education, post-secondary remedial education, lower division collegiate education, adult continuing education, and career and technical education.

Oregon colleges assist students in accessing federal benefits like SNAP. High rates of food and housing insecurity affect community college students, with 41% experiencing food insecurity and 52% facing housing insecurity in 2019.

Community colleges also provide essential job training for local industries. Community colleges are doing our part to increase enrollment and generate revenue to better serve our communities, but we still need your ongoing support. I urge you to support House Bill 5025 and ensure that Oregon's community colleges can continue offering affordable education, wraparound services, and job training.

Thank you,