

Submitter: Kattie Riggs

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.

Clackamas Community College supports the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's request for \$855 million in ongoing funding and \$50 million in one-time funding for the 2023-2025 biennium. This level of funding will enable community colleges to maintain many critical programs and services, even though some reductions will still be required.

I am here to highlight some important points related to the funding needs of Oregon's community colleges. Firstly, the pandemic caused an unprecedented drop in community college enrollment, but we are now seeing some areas rebounding and leveling off. However, the students who are enrolling have greater needs for services such as advising and coaching, as well as help meeting basic needs such as food and housing.

Secondly, student enrollment is growing most in career and technical education programs and short-term certificate programs leading directly to employment. These programs are usually much more expensive to operate than lower-division transfer courses like writing or math. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that community colleges have the necessary funding to offer these programs that prepare students for the workforce and contribute to the economic development of our communities.

Lastly, community colleges are critical workforce training and economic development engines for the communities they serve. When unemployment rises, enrollment usually grows as unemployed workers seek new training and skills. It is imperative that community colleges retain the capacity to meet these local needs and continue to serve their communities effectively.

In conclusion, I urge you to support House Bill 5025 and provide ongoing funding for community colleges. These institutions are essential in providing access to quality education and workforce training for all, especially in times of economic hardship.

Thank you for your attention,
Kattie Riggs