

April 24, 2023

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

We the undersigned constitute the Board of Education for Chemeketa Community College. Each of us represents one of seven zones in the 2,600-square mile service district of the college in Marion, Polk, Yamhill and a portion of Linn counties. We are submitting this written testimony in strong support of HB 5025.

Community colleges in the state of Oregon are funded through three primary sources: property taxes, tuition/fees paid by students, and funding from the state (referred to as the Community College Support Fund, or CCSF). With the 16 other community colleges in Oregon, Chemeketa is asking legislators to support the HECC's request to fund the CCSF at \$855 million in ongoing funding (a 20.1% increase) and \$50 million in one-time funding for the 2023-25 biennium. This may sound like a significant increase, but colleges would require *a roughly 44% increase to fully maintain current services and capacity*. The HECC recommendation provides a funding base from which colleges can continue to maintain many critical programs and services and continue to meet the changing demands of their students, communities and local economies.

We understand the many asks that you are receiving in relation to Oregon's finite fiscal resources. However, we ask you to consider the following:

- Community colleges serve students at all education and skill levels, educating students with the greatest barriers to attaining post-secondary education and training.
- Nationwide, open-access institutions like community colleges saw the greatest enrollment declines as the populations they serve also faced the greatest disruptions from the pandemic. Highly selective universities saw the least decline. This will lead to greater educational and economic inequities if colleges do not have the capacity to re-engage those learners.
- Pandemic shutdowns created significant declines in tuition revenue to colleges. Federal relief dollars helped make up for this gap, but those dollars are now gone, and colleges are facing a fiscal cliff.
- Even as enrollment declined, demand for mental health and wrap-around services increased significantly.
- Today college enrollment is leveling off and has increased at most of our state's community colleges, including Chemeketa.
- Enrollment has been returning at many colleges in more expensive career and technical education (CTE) programs as well short-term career certificate programs. Excellent examples of this at Chemeketa include our Commercial Driving (CDL) and paramedic programs, for which the demand has been enormous and increasing.

- The HECC's recommended investment level would help colleges maintain capacity in many programs as students return. Once a program is shut down for budgetary reasons, it is not easy to simply start it back up again.
- As baby boomers retire, employers are having trouble finding trained workers. Adults with some college but no certificate or degree are the largest group when looking at Oregonians by education levels. Community colleges are best positioned to serve these learners.
- Typically, community college enrollment runs counter-cyclical to unemployment. When unemployment is high, enrollment surges and low unemployment leads to an enrollment decline at colleges. If unemployment increases, colleges will need program capacity to help workers retrain and get back into the workforce.

\$855 million in ongoing funding will help colleges cover cost increases in the next biennium, while \$50 million in one-time funding will help colleges continue to adapt to changing student needs and provide bridge funding for colleges as they make reductions. For example, when a college cuts a program, they try to teach-out the remaining students so cost savings are not immediate.

Because of the critical mission of community colleges and the centrality of their role in shaping a better future for Oregon, we urge you to support HB 5025. At Chemeketa, it will allow us to invest in the future of our communities in ways we simply cannot without adequate state support.

Thank you for considering our testimony, and thank you for your service.

Respectfully submitted,

The Chemeketa Community College Board of Education

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Zone Two



Neva Hutchinson, Vice-Chair
Zone Three



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Zone One

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