

Submitter: Alonso Cruz

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5025

Co-Chairs Frederick, McLain, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alonso Cruz, and I am a senior at the University of Oregon. As you are making important budget decisions during this legislative session, I encourage you to support Oregon's students through robust investments in public higher education, including funding the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) at \$1.05 billion and increasing the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) by \$200 million.

By supporting investments in public education, you're giving underrepresented students a chance to pursue their dreams while breaking down financial barriers to success. While you may be hearing from me today, I'm speaking on behalf of the millions of students like me who are not here today. During my senior year of high school, I decided I wanted to pursue my ambition of becoming a doctor. However, college just seemed unaffordable. Ultimately, I was enamored by the opportunities available for students at UO and decided to take my chance at some of them. In 2021, I received the Knight Campus Undergraduate Scholarship, an award that allowed me to work in a research lab at UO's Knight Campus. Every time I leave the lab, I'm struck by the facilities that are in the building I just left. It reminds me just how amazing it is that I have the opportunity to work with gifted scientists on projects that will have profound real-world impacts. Being a student here also allowed me to explore and develop my other interests, including science communication. One example of this occurred last year when I met with state and federal legislators to advocate for government support of scientific research. Now, as I'm about to graduate, I'm often asked "What's next?". Thanks in large part to the people I've met at UO, I want to continue on my path in medicine and communicate science to people around the world—with my highest goal being to become the surgeon general of the United States. And none of this would be possible without the financial assistance I received.

Oregon ranks 45th in the nation for per-student, state funding of public universities and invests less than half the national average in financial aid per public university student. After years of pandemic-related challenges, students have greater needs than ever before. It is critical for the state to support wraparound services such as financial aid, academic support, career development, and basic needs support – including food and housing assistance through Benefits Navigators. A \$1.05 billion budget is critical as it will allow public universities to continue offering education and services for students without increasing tuition beyond 5 percent at most institutions. Finally, In addition to investing in the PUSF and OOG, I encourage you to sustain

funding for tribal student grants, which help fund tuition, housing, and books for eligible, enrolled members of Oregon's Tribes.

Thank you for your service to our state and thank you for supporting Oregon's students and public higher education institutions.

Sincerely,

Alonso Cruz  
University of Oregon