

Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Ruiz and McIntire, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

For the record, my name is Elizabeth Braatz, I am a student at Portland State University, and was one of the student members on the Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education. I am writing today in support of HB 3121 with the -1 Amendment that will help make critical investments in Open Oregon Educational Resources, Oregon's statewide textbook affordability program.

I graduated from Western Oregon University in 2022 with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. I am currently at Portland State University, where I will be receiving my Master of Public Policy in 2024. I have had the opportunity to work alongside, nationally, some of the most dedicated staff and faculty within higher education and open education.

The purpose and mission of open education and developmental networks of OER, is to not only improve open education, but promote open education as a system that is devoted to increasing student success in postsecondary institutions. An emphasis and centralized principle of open education is reaching underserved student populations who face multiple barriers and disparities that inhibit their ability to be successful students.

Open education is presenting a timely and imperative opportunity to ensure we are setting up future generations for success, prosperity, and self-agency. As a student, I have witnessed students from both WOU and PSU struggle to find a way to pay for their textbooks, among other basic necessities. Many of my friends and peers often do not even purchase or rent textbooks because they would rather save that money for rent, car insurance, groceries, clothing, and many other things. Textbook affordability, and the unaffordability of post-secondary institutions in general, is an issue that is not just applicable to Oregon colleges and universities, this is an epidemic that is plaguing this nation. Unaffordability is one component of this epidemic, but the inaction from administrations to address this reality, is unconscionable.

OER not only provides a sustainable and effective solution, but students deserve an education space where they are valued, heard, and seen for who they are, and who they want to be.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope that students can count on your support of HB 3121 with the -1 Amendment.