



February 8, 2024

To: House Committee On Higher Education
From: Partners For a Hunger-Free Oregon
RE: Support for HB 4162

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

My name is Chris Baker, and I am the Legislative Strategist at Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon. We are a statewide anti-hunger advocacy organization whose values and work are centered on creating systemic changes to end hunger and poverty.

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon strongly supports HB 4162, the Student Emergency Needs Package.

Just nine years ago, I was a single parent college student, trying desperately to navigate systems to have my family's needs met so that I could graduate and help lift myself and my children out of poverty. I know firsthand the multitude of challenges that today's college students face.

In 2021, I was part of the coalition that helped write HB 2835, the Benefits Navigator bill. Since the passage of HB 2835, Benefits navigators have played a vital role in connecting tens of thousands of students with critical resources, including but not limited to food assistance, housing support, and healthcare services, but they are *severely* underfunded. HB 4162 will make a substantial impact on navigators' ability to adequately resource basic needs support on their campuses.

The passage of HB 2835 demonstrated a commitment by legislators to supporting Oregon's college students. It is clear that you understand that addressing food insecurity is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic investment in the educational attainment and future contributions of our students. By providing the necessary resources to support basic needs, we can create an environment where students can thrive academically and graduate with the skills needed to contribute to Oregon's workforce and community development.

Please support HB 4162. Your support will not only empower students to overcome immediate challenges but will also contribute to the creation of a more equitable and prosperous future for our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I trust that you will continue to prioritize the well-being and success of Oregon's college students.

Sincerely,
Chris Baker