



February 8, 2024

TO: House Higher Education
FROM: Our Children Oregon
RE: Support for HB 4162

Dear Chair Lively, Vice-Chair McIntire, Vice-Chair Ruiz, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon (OCO) is a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together ~135 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2024 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families.

We support HB 4162 to establish higher education affordability for Oregon students.

University and college students in Oregon continue to face higher rates of homelessness and food insecurity to pay for basic needs for their education. According to the 2019 HOPE Center's Real College survey, among Oregon community college students, 63% of respondents identified as food insecure, housing insecure, or homeless. Student Emergency Needs Package supports the Statewide Textbook Affordability Program and Oregon's Basic Needs Navigator. This package will create a \$5 million grant program to allow students to have essential needs for schooling through infrastructure upgrades and direct student aid for vouchers and childcare subsidies.

In 2021, 81% of students graduated from high school in four years. 45% of children in Oregon families are living in poverty, meaning many of these families will not be able to pay for those graduated children to get a higher education¹. In 2022, only 42% of young adults, ages 18-24, were enrolled or have completed college in Oregon². HB 4162 will help students at public institutions and community colleges apply and receive assistance for their basic needs. One of the understated costs of attending college are the textbooks. Textbooks are about 7% of the

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<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/5059-children-in-low-income-working-families-by-family-nativity?loc=39&loct=2#detailed/2/39/false/1095,2048,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868/78,79/11476,11477>

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<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/77-young-adults-ages-18-to-24-who-are-enrolled-in-or-have-completed-college?loc=39&loct=2#detailed/2/39/false/1095,2048,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868/any/388,389>

total cost of attendance, which is approximately \$1400 per semester spent on book supplies³. While it seems small compared to the rest of the attendance costs, this creates a financial emergency for students. When a student is unable to afford housing and food to purchase textbooks, it creates a barrier to that student's success and takes away their opportunity at an education.

As a student myself, who comes from a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) single-parent household with a single income to pay for my education. As lucky as I am to have my parent pay for my schooling, it has put an extreme strain on me to be able to afford and pay for my textbooks, food, and bills. I know that Oregon can do better by being able to provide more access for students, especially those from low-income households. Students should not have to pick and choose what textbook they will purchase just to have enough funds to have a meal. Educational basic needs are a necessity for student's learning, growth, and success. As someone who wants everyone to have the opportunity to have an education, this cannot be possible without the passing of HB 4162.

We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge your support of HB 4162.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Marley Chavarria, Policy and Advocacy Intern

Ivy Major-McDowall, Policy and Advocacy Director

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2024 Children's Agenda at <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/2024-childrens-agenda/>

³ <https://openoregon.org/small-dollar-amounts-are-significant/>



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