

Submitter: Devon Lawson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce
Development

Measure, Appointment or
Topic: HB3618

My name is Devon Lawson, and I am a student at Lane Community College. I am here today to express my strong support for HB 3618, which provides funding to Southwestern Oregon Community College (SWOCC) to repair the elevators in Tioga Hall. This is a straightforward but critical investment in student safety, accessibility, and the long-term viability of public higher education facilities.

As a community college student, I know that many students rely on campus infrastructure to fully access their education. When something as essential as an elevator is in disrepair, it creates serious barriers—especially for students, faculty, and staff with disabilities or mobility impairments. Ensuring that all students can access their classrooms, dormitories, and campus resources is not optional; it is a fundamental right. Without functioning elevators, we risk excluding people from higher education simply because of the condition of a building.

This bill is also a matter of public safety. Elevators are not just about convenience; they are a necessary component of emergency preparedness. In the event of a fire, medical emergency, or natural disaster, individuals who cannot use stairs must have a reliable means of exiting a building safely. Neglecting infrastructure maintenance is not just an inconvenience—it can put lives at risk.

Moreover, this bill highlights the importance of investing in community colleges. Schools like SWOCC and Lane Community College serve diverse populations, including first-generation college students, working adults, and rural communities. Unlike larger universities with larger endowments and state funding, community colleges often operate on tight budgets. If public institutions do not invest in basic infrastructure needs, these schools are forced to make difficult cuts elsewhere, which ultimately hurts students.

Some may question why state funding should be used for an elevator repair, but the reality is that public colleges are a public good. Investing in infrastructure today prevents higher costs down the road when neglected buildings require even more extensive renovations. Keeping facilities in good working order is fiscally responsible, ensuring that schools can continue serving students without interruption or crisis-driven funding requests.

I urge the committee to support this bill and demonstrate Oregon's commitment to safe, accessible, and fully functional community colleges. Every student—regardless

of ability, income, or background—deserves a campus that is safe and accessible. This is a small but necessary step toward ensuring that SWOCC can continue providing quality education to all who seek it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.