

**Submitter: Ryan Wight**

**On Behalf Of: Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means**

**Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006**

Dear Co-Chair Kate Lieber, Co-Chair Tawna Sanchez, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Ryan Wight, and I work for the Portland State University Foundation, where I support the administration of scholarships. I see firsthand the impact financial aid has on students—helping them stay in school, complete their degrees, and pursue careers that bolster Oregon’s economy. That’s why I’m asking you to increase the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) by \$275 million in the 2025-27 biennium.

Public universities like Portland State University serve a diverse student population, many of whom are first-generation college students, working adults, or individuals balancing school with family responsibilities - in many cases all three. Yet state funding for higher education has not kept pace with rising costs. As has been said already, Oregon invests significantly less per student than neighboring states, forcing universities to raise tuition and leaving many students struggling to afford their education—even with scholarships, a majority of which do not cover the whole cost of in-state tuition and fees, much less other educational costs and living expenses. Additionally, scholarships are highly competitive, and many scholarship amounts remain stagnant and become less impactful year over year in the face of rising tuition and living costs.

A \$275 million increase in PUSF funding would make a meaningful difference by:

- Keeping tuition more affordable so fewer students are priced out of earning a degree.
- Preserving critical student support services like advising, emergency aid, and career development that help students stay on track.
- Ensuring high-quality education by recruiting and retaining distinguished faculty and maintaining competitive programs that align with Oregon’s workforce needs.

I regularly see that scholarships alone are not enough to close the affordability gap. State investment is essential to ensuring that all students—regardless of financial means—have access to the opportunities that higher education provides.

On a personal note, I am here today because I believe investment in education is an investment in the future of our democracy, which is in crisis.

The future of federal funding notwithstanding, I urge you to support this critical funding increase for Oregon’s future, and for the future of The United States of America. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Ryan Wight