



Good afternoon. For the record, my name is Dave Dallas and I'm on the faculty of the College of Education at Eastern Oregon University as well as the director of Teach Rural Oregon a Grow Your Own grant funded program in partnership with the Wallowa Educational Service District. I appreciate you allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today about continued investment in higher education in Oregon and specifically in rural parts of our state.

I cannot stress enough how important continued funding through mechanisms such as House Bill 5006 is to rural areas served by EOU. The EOU College of Education continues to address the shortage of qualified teachers in rural areas, by attracting students to the field of education, and supporting teachers who teach in these rural communities and districts. According to the 2023 report Why Rural Matters Report, 65% of Oregon's school districts are considered to be 'small, or rural' and as Oregon's Rural University, the College of Education at Eastern Oregon University is committed to addressing the needs of rural schools throughout Oregon with our educational partners. It is a vast and diverse area, larger than 20 of the states in the union, but with a population of just under 230,000 people.

The College of Education has benefited from many of the grant and legislative funded programs supported by the legislature. These include the following: HB 3427, the Student Success Act which has helped fund the Oregon Teach Pathway program and Teach Rural Oregon, HB 4031, the Educator Equity Act which has supported our IA Pathway and Future Educators Program, and HB 3198, the Early Literacy Success Initiative, which has supported the work of our EOU Reading Clinic and the literacy training for teachers and teacher candidates throughout Eastern Oregon and other parts of the state. Additionally, Greater Oregon STEM serves 7 counties, and our EOU Head Start program serves 6 centers between two Eastern Oregon counties have also benefited greatly through grant funded support from the legislature. Without this funding rural teacher education would be vastly different and there would be few opportunities and incentives for teachers to consider teaching in a rural and underserved part of Oregon.

As we look at this current legislative session I wish to highlight the importance of three considered bills within House Bill 5006: HB 2997 for College Access and Success, HB 3182 for basic needs for students, and HB 3183 for Open Educator Resources for teachers and other educators.

In the Ford Family Foundation's report Oregon by the Numbers from the 13 counties in Eastern Oregon that are the most rural focused, six of these counties are in the top third for 5 year graduation rate in Oregon, yet all of the counties are below Oregon's 4-year college degree or

greater percentage of 35.5% and more than half these counties have less than 20% of the population that have a 4 year college degree or greater. HB 2997 requests the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to establish a grant program of supporting organizations to expand the scope of and community reach of college access and success programs and HB 3182 relates to aiding students in higher education and directs the HECC to administer a grant program to fund basic needs programming for students in higher education. These bills would benefit those students in our area that are seeking guidance and assistance in determining future goals and pathways to technical, community college, or university programs. Programs such as College Promise Oregon can work directly with EOU to reach out into these rural communities and assist in making students aware of the various opportunities available and providing financial assistance when needed.

As an instructor in EOU's Professional Learning Community and dual credit programs I have first hand seen the benefits of access to open educational resources. I work with several instructors in rural high schools that lack the appropriate curriculum or informational resources for new mandated programs such as Senate Bill 3, the Personal Financial Education and Higher Education and Career Path Skills requirement, SB 513 the High School Civics requirement, SB 664 Holocaust & Genocide, and SB 13 Tribal History/Shared History, among others. This access to Open Educational Resources provides up-to-date resources for teachers as well as professors who are trying to develop curriculum that does not require students to spend money on expensive textbooks that can quickly become out of date. HB 3183 appropriates money to HECC for the Open Educational Resources Program.

In closing, I hope that you will continue to support existing and worthwhile statewide grant initiatives as well as the three highlighted bills before this year's legislature that I have noted. Thank you for your time, your effort in traveling to this part of the state, and I thank you for your support of these valuable and worthwhile programs.